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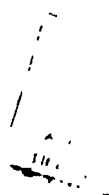
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COMPRISING
TRIPS IN SOMALILAND, SINAI,
THE EASTERN DESERT OF EGYPT, CRETE,
THE CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS,
AND DAGHESTAN

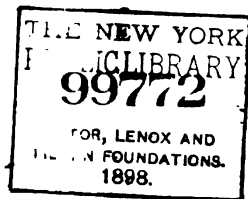
BY

EDWARD NORTH BUXTON

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS

LONDON: EDWARD STANFORD
26 & 27 COCKSPUR STREET, CHARING CROSS, S.W.

1898



PREFACE

I HOPE, in issuing a second series of *Short Stalks*, that some slight reflection of the pleasure which I have derived from the journeys herein described may reach my readers.

I have illustrated this volume from my own photographs, which, though the mere casual snap-shots of an amateur, perhaps give more reality to the text than the engraver's art, however beautiful. They have been excellently reproduced by the Swan Electric Engraving Company, to whom my thanks are due. Some of the blocks have been borrowed from my daughter's book, *On Either Side of the Red Sea*. Mr. J. G. Millais' work is always welcome to sportsmen. He has kindly furnished me with the vigorous design for the cover of the volume.

Three of these chapters have appeared in the *Nineteenth Century*, and I am indebted to the editor of that magazine for permission to republish them. Messrs. Longman have kindly allowed me to include the article on

Crete which I contributed to the *Badminton Magazine*. The map of the Somaliland Protectorate is added, not only for the convenience of sportsmen, but to make it clear what are now the limitations of their rights, on the one hand by the extension of the Aden Reserve, and on the other by the treaty, lately concluded with the Emperor Menelek, which curtails the boundaries of our Protectorate, and forbids armed parties to cross that boundary. It is a transcription from a map prepared under the direction of Mr. A. E. Pease, M.P., and comprises the latest observations of travellers up to the present date, including his own. I have added to it the most permanent watering-places, as noted by Major Swayne and other authorities. It is, I think, the most complete map of the country as yet published. My thanks are also due to the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office for permission to use a portion of the Ordnance Survey map of the peninsula of Sinai.

E. N. BUXTON.

KNIGHTON, *March* 1898.

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MAPS

The Somali Protectorate	<i>In the Front Cover</i>
The Granite Range of Sinai	<i>In the Back Cover</i>

SOMALILAND AND PEOPLE

NEARLY six hundred years ago that worthy old explorer and missionary, Friar Jordanus, wrote of the Eastern Horn of Africa, which he passed on his way to the scene of his labours in India—"Of India Tertia I will say this, that I have not indeed seen its many marvels, not having been there, but have heard them from trustworthy persons. For example, there be dragons in the greatest abundance, which carry on their heads the lustrous stones which be called carbuncles. These animals have their lying-place upon golden sands, and grow exceeding big, and cast forth from the mouth a most fetid and infectious breath, like the thickest smoke rising from fire. These animals come together at the destined time, develope wings, and begin to raise themselves in the air, and then, by the judgment of God, being too heavy, they drop into a certain river which issues from Paradise, and perish there. But all the regions round about watch for the time of the dragons, and when they see that one has fallen, they wait for seventy days, and then go down and find the bare bones of the

dragon, and take the carbuncle which is rooted in the top of his head, and carry it to the emperor of the Æthiopians, whom you call Prestre Johan. In this India Tertia are certain birds, which are called Roc, so big that they easily carry an elephant up into the air. I have seen a certain person who said that he had seen one of those birds, one wing only of which stretched to a length of eighty palms. In this India are the true unicorns, like a great horse, having only one horn in the forehead, very thick and sharp, but short, and quite solid, marrow and all. This creature, it is said, is of such fierceness that it will kill an elephant, nor can it be captured except by a virgin girl. . . . There be serpents with horns, and some with precious stones. . . . There also be certain animals like an ass, but with tranverse stripes of black and white, such as that one stripe is black and the next white. These animals be wonderfully beautiful."

It thus appears that the fauna of Somaliland has, for a long time past, been reputed to be varied and exciting. That it still remains attractive to the sportsman goes without saying. Indeed it has been so well explored and described that it is almost an impertinence to add to its literature, of which I have quoted an early specimen. On the other hand there are still so many who want to go there, that even the notes of such a limited trip as mine will perhaps be read.

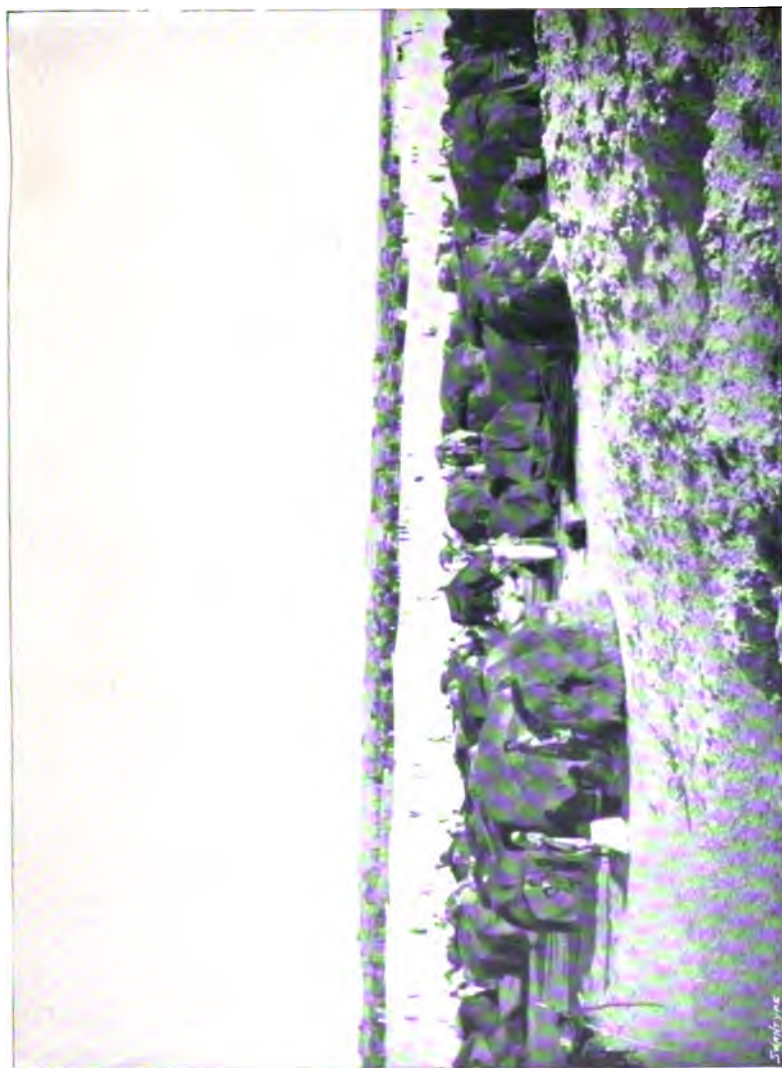
We thought we had made excellent time in arriving at Bulhar, on the Somali coast, in eight hours less than ten days from London. There is pleasure in making a record, even when it is due to the "legs" of the *Caledonia*, and not to one's own. The coast is flat and low, but is

backed in the distance by the Golis Range, which had been visible for several hours before we cast anchor. Bulhar is an open roadstead; and the little steamer *Tuna*, of unsavoury memory, anchored outside a sandy spit, on which there are nasty breakers when the wind is fresh from the north. It was perhaps a little risky to appoint our camels to meet us here, instead of at Berbera, where they had been purchased, as there was some chance of a landing being rendered impossible; but, as our intended course lay to the west, we risked this, to save three days of monotonous travelling along the shore, and fortune favoured us. The white walls of the Residency and compound showed on the top of the sandy bank, but the greater part of the native town of beehive-shaped huts was hidden by the rise. We had sent on the bulk of our luggage to Berbera some weeks earlier, and, from the sea, a glimpse of the green canvas of one of my tents assured us that our "Kafila" had arrived. At the moment there was no European in the place, but we were received by a crowd of some three hundred Somalis, many of whom swam out to the sandy spit, regardless of sharks, and stood there, waist deep, greeting us with a lively display of splashing. The shore was shelving, and we were carried from the boats, shoulder high, in a sort of armchair, the lady of our party exciting much interest. A multitude of willing hands at once transported our luggage to the Residency. These Somalis are tall and slim, with beautiful coppery skins, and wear the graceful white "tobe," which hangs from their shoulders. Their feet are protected by large sandals of skin, shaped like a Canadian toboggan. Maybe this was the origin of Sir John Maundeville's

“marvayle” about Ethiopia—that the “folk have but one foot, so large that it shadoweth all the body against the sun, when they will lie and rest them.” Many were scarred with wounds, for they are a quarrelsome race. The majority carried spears. This is forbidden at Berbera, where they are required to deposit them during their winter residence on the coast, receiving a ticket in exchange—like umbrellas at a picture gallery. They dress their hair every few days with great care, covering it with some earth which abounds in lime, and which gives them the appearance of Belgravian footmen. When the white powder is removed the hair assumes a flaxen hue.

Although the Resident was absent, we were kindly made free of his house, and took full advantage of his cool shelter. Here we found some splendid koodoo heads hanging on the walls, which interested us, as these are the most enviable trophies, and the most difficult to obtain, in Somaliland.

This is the time to mention the personnel of our expedition. We English numbered four, A. E. P. and his wife, A. E. L., and myself; Celestin Passet, who for many years has accompanied me on such expeditions; Joseph, who had preceded us to Berbera, and who hails from Syria, is an able camp manager, but in all matters affecting the caravan he understood that the Somali “head-man,” Adan Yusuf, was responsible. Adan is a quiet man and looks delicate, but he has a reputation for determination, which we found to be well deserved. Subordinate to him was Abbi, who would act as a second “head-man” if we divided our forces; then we had six shikaris, two to



A NATIVE TOWN.

each gun, three syces to look after the ponies, twenty camel-men, and two Somali "bearers," to adopt the Indian term for servant. Each Somali was called up by name, and we examined him and spoke a few words of caution through the interpreter, according to his functions. "Is this a good syce?" "Will he take care to collect food for his ponies, and see that they do not get sore backs?" "What Englishmen has he been with?" etc. Then there were the ponies to gallop, a duty at which Alfred was great, for he loves a good horse. They are weedy little things to look at, but with a fair amount of stamina.

We now found that the total of our "truck," which included numerous boxes of provisions for ourselves, and heavy packages of rice, dates, and ghee for the men's rations, cloth for barter, etc., bulked too heavy for the forty camels which had been secured for us. We had also to provide for abundant water-carriage, as the first two or three days across the plain would be waterless; so that, before starting, we undertook an extra deal in camels—not an easy matter in the absence of a responsible interpreter. Adan was our only broker. His English was rudimentary, but he would rather waste a day than let us be cheated. Ultimately we acquired four more camels. Each man's daily ration is 1 lb. of rice, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of dates, and 2 oz. of ghee or native butter. If more camels are required more men must be engaged, and extra rations taken, which again involves more camels—a most puzzling problem in arithmetic. I also bought an Arabian trotting camel, for which I had to pay a long price, but which I thought would be useful to carry a mail to the coast, as he could easily cover sixty miles in a day. I may here

mention that our camels, which cost us about forty rupees each, had so risen in value when we returned to the coast, owing to the demands of the Italians for Abyssinia, that, though seven or eight had died, and the rest were half starved, we made a profit on their sale.

During these transactions we were constantly interrupted by Somalis who begged to be taken on, as there is a great competition to enter the service of an Englishman, and many had marched from Berbera on the chance. Hour after hour our chamber was constantly invaded by these gentry, who pressed us to examine their "chits," or written recommendations, and our peace disturbed by the search for some missing article. The next morning the same experiences were repeated, so that it was twenty-four hours after our arrival before the camels could be loaded, and that was justly considered to be unusually prompt despatch. At last all was ready, and the final ceremony performed of parading our men and distributing the Snider rifles, which it is *de rigueur* that the camel-men should carry, but which they are not allowed to load without orders. The shikaris are exempt from this duty, as it is their pride and privilege to carry the sahib's gun, which is invariably kept in brilliant condition.

We mounted our ponies and passed through the native town, which might be taken for a range of small Scotch hayricks. The huts or *gurgi* are formed of camel mats stretched on a frame of bent sticks. These sticks surmount all the other household goods of a Somali "family removing," and project from the back of the camel like a pair of gigantic horns. Our camels formed a long line in Indian file some hundreds of yards in length. The



A FAMILY REMOVING.

to keep out an enemy, whether man or beast. When the camels, having finished their meal, are driven into the enclosure and made to lie down in close rank, and their loads of boxes are piled together, there is not much spare room. It is not well to pitch the tents to leeward of the camels, for their odour is powerful at close quarters. On the other hand, except for their noisy chewing, which is like the sound of endless churning, they are quieter at night than the Arabian camel, which, as I believe, snarls in his dreams.

On these expeditions the first dinner is a trial. Care sits at that feast. How anxiously the cook is weighed in the balance. If the potatoes are half-cooked, what a prospect! In our case the verdict was moderately favourable. The quality of the bed is even more important. We were soon in a position to test that also. Mine proved to be six inches too short. When in camp I generally find it most comfortable to lie on the ground—that is always long enough; but the probability of white ants, which, I was told, devour anything softer than steel, and of other crawlers, compelled me to use a thing with legs. These same legs soon got rickety, and I got rid of them, and supported my couch on two boxes.

Sentry duty is strictly performed, and the watch changed three times during the night. If I chanced to look out through the open flap, I never failed to find the two white figures, either erect and motionless, or stooping and gently stirring the embers.

The fact that every camel-man has his special load, and knows it, greatly facilitates a rapid start in the



A SNUG CAMP.

seemed to tire that slim, compact figure, and he was always the last to abandon a hunt. Like most of his fellow-countrymen, he showed the scars of past injuries. The most conspicuous was a deep dent in the top of his skull, which looked as if it might have been caused by a pick-axe. There is an excellent little hospital at Berbera, and the authorities told me that the recoveries which these people make are marvellous. The native treatment of wounds is to cauterize them with a hot cinder. After a long day Jama would neither rest nor eat until he had cleaned and polished my rifle, which done, he would bring it to the *sircal*, as he called me, to look down the barrel, and grin with pleasure when I expressed approval; but his chief delight was to convict me of some act of carelessness. On these occasions he gave me a reproving shake of the head, as much as to say he found me incorrigible.

I began by trying to learn a few Somali words, but I found that my followers picked up my language so much faster than I did theirs, that I generally addressed them in English, eked out by a few Arabic and Somali words. Jama was at first almost devoid of English, but he had one expression—"gone too far"—which was of almost universal application. If game was scarce, or dinner was late, or there was no shade to be found, one and all had "gone too far." In fact it meant generally that things were not satisfactory. The first time he examined my small-bore rifle he declared that that had "gone too far," meaning thereby that it was of no manner of use; but he altered his opinion completely when he observed its electric effect, even on the largest antelopes. When I



MY TWO SHIKARIS.

missed some animal outright the expression annoyed me, it was so true.

Abdullah, the second shikari, was the best looking of my followers. His strong point was skinning the heads which I desired to preserve, and he took a great pride in his taxidermical expertness. It is of importance in this climate that these trophies should be prepared as quickly as possible. I found the best plan was to keep a zinc water-carrier, with a large mouth closed by a screw-top, which is filled with a solution of carbolic acid, in the proportion of one to fifteen of water. This always stood ready, and the "mask" is immersed before any change can take place, and remains in pickle, whether the camp is stationary or marching. At the end of two or three days it should be removed and dried, after which nothing more is necessary but an occasional dressing of turpentine to defeat the countless black beetles. These pests are, however, useful in their way, for they help to clean the skulls, which are laid on the ground for the purpose.

The queerest figure among our followers was my *syce*. Being very black and ugly, as well as badly disfigured by small-pox, he naturally took a great pride in his hair, which he wore long, and generally in the ochrey stage, as to colour. His other special fancy was a single old lawn-tennis shoe, which he constantly wore; no doubt living in the expectation that Allah would, inshallah! some day send him its fellow. He prized it as if he had bought it at Christie's. An old coloured shawl completed his adornment and gave him the appearance of an aged woman, but he took excellent care of my pony, removing the bridle occasionally so that it could get a bite on

the march, and cutting grass for it when food was short. As he did most things at a run, Yeh Awad was frequently in a streaming condition, and the lime in his hair made white water-courses down his black face and body.

During the whole of the second day we continued to cross the "Guban" or maritime plain, which is covered with low scrub, something like that which is called "sage brush" in America. Alfred was soon far out on the right flank, in vain pursuit of a bustard, which I should judge had been shot at before, for I saw through the glass that it had its head up all through his cautious approach. Later in the day I made a successful shot, at long range, at one of these noble birds. This gave me confidence in my Mannlicher rifle, and, what was of equal importance, raised me in the estimation of my shikari. Small bands of aoul were dotted over the plain. It is impossible to miss seeing them, owing to their broad white sterns. At midday Alfred rejoined us, bringing welcome meat in the shape of a buck aoul. Notwithstanding the rules as to the Reserve, when meat is wanted in camp, necessity compels, and these small antelopes are abundant. Oryx were also seen; but these were let alone. After about five hours' march search is made for a thorn-tree, which casts a tolerable shade. The camels are unloaded and are free to make a good feed for three or four hours. They are slow eaters, and, unless they are allowed abundance of time for this, soon lose flesh.

The midday halt is always pleasant. It is the only time when there is no hurry. At morning or at evening there is ever something to be done against time. Not that we, or our men, were idle even in the noontide heat.



ON THE MARCH.

20

There were generally skins to be seen to, repairs to be effected, a sore back to be attended to, or a sick Somali dosed. If our followers had nothing better to do, they sat cleaning their teeth with a short stick, cut from a special shrub, which is always used for this purpose. I remember that, at our first luncheon camp, one of my companions, following the custom of many of the natives, submitted his head to be clean shaved. In such like occupations the three hours' halt passes quickly. Besides, it is much the best chance for a square meal. It is not till the sun has sensibly abated its power that we start for the second march, which it is better to cut rather short, so that the camels may feed again before dark.

The Gadabursi Mountains, for which we were bound, loomed in front of us, but were heavily covered with rain clouds. We were not sorry for this, as it would mean better feed for our camels, but were less well pleased when the rain reached our camp that night, converting the surface into greasy mud, and caused still more inconvenience to our lightly-clad followers, who sleep in the open. This was the *Jeldal*, or dry season, so we were somewhat surprised at the visitation. I had brought a few army blankets, which were distributed among the shikaris and other leading men, and was sorry to have to refuse the camel-men, who came round in a body, begging a similar favour, for to my great regret I had no more. They retired without a murmur when this was explained to them, and neither then, nor on any subsequent occasion, did we have any insubordination or trouble. On the contrary, it was their pleasure to do us little services not in

the contract. Cases have no doubt occurred of mutinous conduct, and of demands which are inadmissible, but a great safeguard against this is to pick your men from various tribes, in which case combination among them is improbable. Our men were always bubbling over with good nature. True, they occasionally quarrelled among themselves. When an insult had been given which could only be wiped out with blood, the two combatants would carefully lay aside their rifles, for which they entertained a profound respect, then, falling upon one another, bit and scratched, and rolled on the ground, till they were tired.

Owing to the wet, our second night was uncomfortable, but to tell the truth a light sleeper suffers from many disturbances of his rest in Africa. In the first place he generally sleeps in a passage, his tent being open at both ends, and there is an ever present consciousness that it may be used as a thoroughfare by night wanderers, from a hyena to a bat. As a matter of fact, when camping near rocks the bats do constantly so use it, making little disturbing currents of air with their wings. Then there is a large cockchafer, or beetle, which has a mania for climbing up the roof, as if he were a member of the Alpine Club. He is armed with claws with which he laboriously struggles upwards. You can almost hear him panting, and ejaculating the formula well known to A. C.'s, "Encore deux pas et nous sommes sauvés," or boasting that this was the steepest green canvas slope he ever attempted. Then comes a moment of hesitation. He loses his head and his hold, and comes rasping and scratching past your head, down the tremendous glissade



A MIDDAY HALT.

and over the abyss at the bottom. He reaches the ground with a thump, which you assume has knocked him out of time. Not a bit of it. In a few minutes he feebly renews his attempt. Most nights there are hyenas round the zareba. It was some weeks later that one of these usually cowardly beasts came in and stole a bridle from under the outer flap of Celestin's tent. He devoured part of it, but the bit was too much for him. If the moon was bright enough I sometimes saw them, and tried a shot, but without success, so far as I know, until one morning, just as it was getting light, a belated hyena was perceived, strolling about among the ponies, who were feeding on a grassy bank a hundred yards off. They were perfectly unconcerned and continued to graze. When he noticed the stir in camp he ran and hid behind one of them, but his curiosity getting the better of him, I rolled him over. This was a very large specimen of the common spotted kind, and measured just six feet from tail to snout.

Our second camp was pitched near some ground cut up by ravines. Here I saw for the first time the *gerenook*, and the diminutive blue-gray *dik-dik*. The latter is about the size of a newly-born kid, but with attenuated legs scarcely thicker than pencils. If fairly hidden among scrub, this tiny antelope will let a man get within thirty or forty yards, often standing at gaze, its large black eyes and pointed ears just showing over the low bushes. If it thinks itself unobserved it will go off at a trot, when its gait and long ears give it the appearance of a miniature donkey. More often it clears the bushes in a series of flying leaps, its thin legs projecting at each bound like a rudder, in line with the back. The long-

necked gerenook, or *Lithocranius Walleri*, is a bush feeder like the giraffe, and is built on the same lines, except that the males carry curved horns. The body is on the scale of a small fallow-deer, but such is its length of leg and neck, that the head, when the animal is on guard, is held over six feet from the ground. They are generally found in small families of three or four. The bright chestnut back makes it fairly easy to see even among the bush. On the other hand its sharp sight and length of neck give it a conspicuous advantage against pursuers. At the first sign of danger the gerenook slinks behind the bushes, and peeps over the top as from a small watch-tower. Imagine the strategical advantage you would have in guerilla warfare if you could screw your head on to your umbrella, and gently elevate it till it looked over the parapet, especially if your eyes were placed quite at the top. If they think themselves followed, down go their heads, nearly to the ground, and they retreat at a slouching trot, and keeping completely out of sight. If you can manage to catch sight of one of these animals before he sees you, and that is seldom, do not shoot him, but watch him feeding. You will not have such a chance at the Zoo, for this species has never been brought alive to Europe. When he has consumed what he can reach in a normal attitude, he rears up and stands on his hind legs, assuming a perfectly erect position. With the fore feet, which are carried level with the cheeks, he holds the boughs down, and assists his balance. If he happens to be facing you, so as to show his white belly, the appearance is particularly odd, being that of a tall brown man clad in a white apron. In my opinion the gerenook offers as pretty and difficult



SONALI CATTLE.

stalking as any animal in Somaliland, but they are not uncommon, and perseverance is sure to receive its reward.

I got a gerenook a few days later, when we had reached the border of the Reserve, and I have special reason for remembering it. It was the first-fruits of my rifle, as far as large game was concerned, and I had besides a nasty fright over it. The animal had given me only a doubtful snap-shot, but I fancied, from the manner of its retreat, that it was hurt. Jama and I made a detour to a ridge which commanded a ravine into which it had disappeared. After a good deal of cautious peering about on my shikari's part, he pointed out a brown patch among dense thorn bush, which he said was the gerenook. I could not have told that it was an animal at all, still less which was the right end, but as I believed it to be wounded, I fired again quickly, and Jama indicated by a sign that I had hit him behind the shoulder, thereby showing an acuteness of eyesight which to me seemed miraculous. We ran on, and while seeking the track, became aware of something moving behind a dense thorn bush. I stood waiting with the rifle at the "ready," but was fortunately cool, for out walked Celestin and Abdullah, who, contrary to orders, had followed us—a most dangerous practice in thick covert. My heart was in my mouth at the thought of what might have happened, and they were reprimanded with an energy proportioned to the fright I had had. We now found the gerenook struggling on the ground, and I was just in time to persuade Jama that his scruples would be satisfied by bleeding the animal at the base of the neck, instead of nearly severing it close to the head, which

Somalis always want to do. In the case of the gerenook this pious observance is the more unnecessary, as they will not, under any circumstances, eat the flesh of that animal. I never succeeded in obtaining an explanation of this prejudice, except that it was unconnected with their religion. The venison is, in fact, as good as that of the other antelopes, all of which these people readily consume.

Our Somalis were strict in the performance of their outward religious observances, or at least a majority of them were so. At evening they ranged themselves in a line, facing the *north*, that being the direction of Mecca. One man stood out in front and led the recitation from the Koran. Their voices, chanting the prayers in unison, were not untuneful. But the ceremony which they entered into most heartily was the occasional parade and drill. The English words of command, delivered in sharp military tone, came oddly from A'dan's lips. Then we inspected each rifle, and commended those whose barrels showed the brightest, but as they were constantly rubbing them up, inside and out, as if they loved them, it was rare to find one not in creditable condition. Finally they all ran to quarters as if for defence against a sudden attack, in which case every man is supposed to know his post. All this is for the encouragement of discipline and *esprit de corps*, rather than for business, but they seemed greedy for a fight, if there had been a chance of one, of which there was little prospect. Once one of the men let off his piece accidentally. For this grave offence the delinquent was brought to our table—we were at dinner at the time—and temporarily deprived of his rifle. It appeared that he had been sent out to look for a missing



PARADE.

camel, and, finding himself alone, loaded, and afterwards forgot that he had done so. That was the only cartridge fired during the trip by any of our men, except for signalling purposes.

In my opinion Somaliland is a recruiting ground which is worthy of the consideration of the authorities. This Arab race is fearless, amenable to discipline, and of remarkable endurance. At a later stage I sent in a letter from Hargeisa to the Resident at Berbera. The distance from point to point is, I believe, over a hundred miles. My messenger returned with the answer on the evening of the fourth day. No one seemed to think an average of fifty miles for four consecutive days an unusual performance for a man on foot.

About fifty miles from Bulhar we entered a truly forestal country; indeed I was astonished at the greenness of this part of Africa, even though, in this dry season, many of the trees are scarcely in leaf. The mountains on our flank closed in upon us, and the *tugs*, or dry beds of the rivers, which stream from their sides in the rainy season, were bordered with a dense and varied vegetation. Close to their smooth sandy beds, which look like wide roads, tall reeds and grasses make a dense jungle; behind and among this are groves of *guda* thorns about thirty feet high. This kind is flat topped, and somewhat resembles in outline a small cedar of Lebanon. From the stems of many of them hang rope-like lianas, which burst into light green foliage at the top. The long pendant shoots of this, the *armo* creeper falling nearly to the ground, make natural arbours and a black shade. This jungle swarmed with birds. Ungainly black and white hornbills gave out a

noisy racketting note. Red and white paroquets flitted about, in a jerky manner, and were very lively. The familiar farmyard cackle of the guinea fowl is more often heard than the bird itself is seen, but they occasionally appear in a large covey perched on a thorn-tree, or running on the ground. It is the vulturine kind, with a deep blue head and neck, bare of feathers. It is more brilliantly spotted and is handsomer than our domesticated species. Moreover he fills the bill well as a table bird.

In the morning the forest is alive with tuneful sound, especially the bell-like call, of startling resonance and purity, which proceeds from a small black bird called, I think, the bulbul. The honey bird, though quite a plainly-clad brown bird, rather smaller than the thrush, is one of the most noticeable of the creatures that fly, though for that matter he does not fly much, but sits on a tree, from which he addresses to the passer-by his peremptory little note of invitation, like the twanging of a fiddle-string rapidly repeated. It is obvious that the bird wants something, and if followed, he leads on, and waits on the next tree, repeating his call with intention. The natives talk to the bird politely as they follow it, saying, "Ha, ha [yes, yes], I understand, pray move on." One day, while hunting, our native guide left us unobserved by me. He returned in half an hour with a quantity of beautiful honeycomb, and his hands swollen by stings. I am bound to say that, when I tried the experiment for myself, I was not successful on any occasion. Perhaps the bird thought it a good joke to sell a foreigner. The Somalis said that the bird will sometimes lead them to where a leopard is lying.

The plovers, of which there are several species, annoyed



AMONG THE GUDA THORN TREES.

me a great deal. Ordinarily they stand about on the ground motionless and silent, but, on being disturbed, rise suddenly, with violent flapping and swooping, and at the same time uttering discordant shrieks of terror, calculated to warn any animal within a thousand yards. Many a promising stalk was spoiled for me by these excitable chatterers. The tick birds were a great amusement to me. When the camels are lying or feeding quietly, these birds swarm familiarly over their bodies searching for their prey, to the apparent satisfaction of the camels, who turn their heads in a patronising way to watch their gambols. The birds have an odd habit of dropping to the ground, I suppose because their hold is insecure, and instantly running up the legs again. The pigeon-like flight of sand grouse is often observed near water-holes.

Some thorn-trees are covered with pendant nests shaped like small carpet-bags, which belong, I think, to the weaver bird. The entrance is below and at one end, while the eggs occupy the other. There is a small ridge inside to prevent their rolling out.

Insect life was not very manifest, unless, by stooping, a close examination of the ground was made. Without any sharpened powers of observation I noticed some curious forms of imitation, especially an extremely attenuated grasshopper which exactly resembles a dead stem of grass lying on the ground. We passed one morning through a flight of locusts some miles in length. They swarmed on the ground and on the thorn-trees, and multitudes were in the air to a height of thirty feet. When the sun shone on their mother-o'-pearl wings the effect was beautiful. Their presence, perhaps, accounted for

the exceptional multitudes of birds which we saw thereabouts.

There is a large spider which spins imposing webs across the tracks through the thorn-trees, of so tough a nature that it is no very great exaggeration to say that they pull a man up standing. The threads are of a yellow colour like silk, and these snares are in some places so numerous as to give a golden hue to the hill-side in certain lights, like the morning gleam on gossamer among the ling. Near the sandy river beds a little puff of dust will be seen to rise suddenly from the ground. It is the work of the ant lion, who lies at the bottom of a crater-like cavity, and adopts this expedient to overwhelm insects on its treacherous slopes.

It was the third day from Bulhar before we found water. The watering-places are generally in the river beds. There are well-known spots where the sand is moist, and when holes are scraped out the water flows in. The picture, on the opposite page, was a happy snap-shot of some women, who were giving Jama a bit of their mind when he desired to make use of the water-hole which they had just laboriously scooped with their hands. It will be noticed that some of them have their hair in a bag of webbing. This denotes their status as married women. The unmarried girls wear theirs in small corkscrew curls. Our camels seemed in no hurry to drink, and even the ponies were not very eager. Perhaps this was due to the moist weather we had had, and heavy dews, but it is extraordinary how independent of water the animals, both tame and wild, are in this country. At this and other water-holes, or streams subsequently visited, we found scarcely



WATER JEALOUSY.

any game tracks, though these opportunities for drinking are by no means very frequent. In my opinion the antelopes, of whatever species, drink rarely or never, but imbibe sufficient moisture from the juices of plants and the dew which hangs on them.

The dry ridges between the river beds are covered with a dense growth of thorn-trees of a very holding kind. The worst is the thorny acacia. Though it looks innocent with its soft foliage, its short invisible hooks and flexible twigs hold like spinning-tackle at the end of a pliant rod. My first coat was torn to ribbons so that it was "gone too far" even for Jama, to whom I offered it. After a time one learns to dodge the twigs, but progress is slow through this sort of ground, and there are sounds of rending as the camels wind through it. Wherever there are thorn-trees the red pyramidal ants' nests so characteristic of this country are found. Many are of the narrow proportions of an obelisk. Others, which have been slowly weathered down for ages, are blunt and rounded. They are apparently formed by the slow plastering of some tree stem, which is in time devoured by the ants, dies, and disappears, while the red column, which is rendered as hard as cement, doubtless by the use of some glutinous secretion, lasts like stone. Many, whose original builders have disappeared, are otherwise tenanted. A small owl frequently surmounts the edifice like an image, but on the approach of man, instead of taking flight, drops into some invisible chimney. I saw a whole family of weasels swarm up the side of one of these columns and enter by several holes. Snakes are also said to use them, and even wart-hogs grub out snug domiciles,

into which they retire stern foremost. From the number of porcupines' quills lying about, some of them twenty inches in length, these animals must be common. Yet I have never met a traveller from Somaliland who has seen one alive. But they are nocturnal wanderers. Now and then, when moving cautiously, a party of mongooses may be surprised playing on the path. Round-backed tortoises, or at least the shells of dead ones, are constantly seen. All these use the hollow ant hills occasionally, if not habitually.

From the number of "karias" (native villages) that we passed, there must be good winter feeding hereabouts and a large population. These people follow the grass according to the season. Thus in the summer they are to be found on the plateau of the Haud, which is uninhabitable in the dry season; *i.e.* the winter and spring. At that time they migrate to the hills or the plains just below them, where watering-places are more frequent. Some tribes breed sheep—the little fat-tailed variety with black heads—others cattle, and others camels. This depends on the nature of the feed on the ground which they frequent, and the abundance of water. The karias are surrounded by a zareba large enough to contain all the tame beasts, and high enough to keep out wild ones. But one woman implored us to stop and hunt leopards, which she declared jumped over for her kids every night. That there were some about was confirmed by Alfred, who saw a very large leopard crossing a river bed in broad daylight near this. A few days later Nellie saw one in pursuit of a covey of partridges, which flew in terror across a nullah. We also had "khubber," *i.e.* news, of lions, and we met



AN ANTS' NEST.

some natives taking two lion cubs, about three weeks old, down to Berbera—charming little bundles of yellow fluff. Near the karias the women are constantly engaged in fetching water in the hahns or water bottles. These are made from the fibre of bark which is separated by chewing. This is also women's work. They make many articles of this material.

Near the first water we found plenty of elephant tracks and droppings, and the next morning, *on the fifteenth day after leaving London*, the perfectly fresh tracks of a band of seven. Indeed we probably disturbed them ourselves, for every sinuosity of the soles of their feet was plainly visible in the sand. I would as soon shoot a horse as an elephant, and had no intention under any circumstances of doing so, but Jama followed the trail, and reported that they had gone westward, towards the Gadabursi Mountains, which now rose to a height of seven thousand feet immediately in front of us.

The herds which were evicted from the Golis mountains behind Berbera, soon after the advent of the British sportsman, and have now taken refuge in small numbers in these Gadabursi Mountains, will inevitably be driven altogether from the coast ranges within a brief period, unless steps are taken to secure their last refuge near the coast. It is obvious that the farther they migrate inland, the less is the chance of maintaining an effectual reserve under British observation and control. It seemed to us highly desirable that, at least, the area which is called the Aden Reserve should be constituted a sanctuary within which the elephants should be completely protected. Since my return the attention of the India Office, and through them of the Bombay

Government, has been called to the urgency of this question, and I am glad to say that an order has gone forth in accordance with the above suggestion. The weak point of the arrangement is that it is not enforced, and the authorities say it cannot be enforced, against the natives. It is to be feared that the Midgans kill many with poisoned arrows. It is incumbent on all the Great Powers, within the African spheres of influence, to provide against the extermination of a race of animals which might, conceivably, be of incalculable service hereafter in opening up the country. The German Government is fully conscious of its duty in this respect, and, at any rate on paper, is far in advance of our own, in the elaborate provisions which it has made for the preservation of the larger mammals in German East Africa.

At Dur Dur Ad we found a small running stream which continued above ground for several miles—a rarity even in the mountains, and a welcome change. We had now passed the confines of the territory reserved for the use of the Aden garrison,¹ and being free to hunt, we began to dawdle and take short marches. To some extent this was forced upon us, as several of our camels began to give out, through wasting, generally caused by sore back rather than fatigue. From this time we always had some on the sick list, who, though without loads, dragged wearily at the tail of the column. Then comes a time when one or another cannot be driven another yard. This involves a painful dilemma. Perhaps it is most merciful to shoot them. The all but certain alternative is that, deprived of the protection of man, they will be destroyed by wild beasts,

¹ The Gadabursi country has been subsequently added to the Aden Reserve.



THE GADABURSI MOUNTAINS.

in search of "invisible mixtures" should remember that these are not really so, unless they are broken up by a large irregular pattern or weather stains. It may be that the oryx needs no colour protection, for his javelin-like horns, which exactly prolong the fine curve of his face, are exceeding sharp and tough.

We followed the track of this band for several miles, crossing many nullahs and low hills. Unfortunately we overtook them when they were feeding down wind, and we heard, but did not see, the stampede. I ran back to some rising ground which commanded a better view, and waited for them to cross an opening, which they did at rather long range. Confident that my shot had told we followed the track with care, and at length found a small spot of blood. Now my two men gave me a taste of their quality as trackers. For three hours they patiently picked out the line over a stony country, where I could seldom detect a sign. A minute blood-spot, every ten minutes or so, was proof that they had not confused the tracks, but these indications at length ceased. As the wounded animal did not leave his companions we concluded that he was not much hurt, and we abandoned the pursuit. This a little put me out of conceit of the Mannlicher bullet, but the oryx is the toughest of his tribe, and one of my companions had a similar experience the same day with a far larger bore rifle. It was rather a sad beginning, but I am glad to say that such an experience was not often repeated on this trip. From a high mound Celestin spied a solitary bull feeding—a single oryx is always a bull—but this chance was also lost, owing to Jama's mistake in following a nullah which led us too close on the wind,



WEAVER-BIRDS' NESTS.

and he was jumped without my getting a shot. We followed him also for a long distance—a vain proceeding when an animal has been just alarmed. His track showed that he kept moving on at a walk all the time. No doubt he took means to assure himself that he was being followed. Thus my first hunting day was a failure.

It was now late, and my men had rather a vague idea of the position of Ali Maan, where camp was to be pitched. We turned towards the hills, expecting to find it at the opening of a valley which debouched on the plain, but, seeing nothing, pushed on up the river course. A large karia and a quantity of cattle were an assurance that the well was not far off, but we followed the bed of the river for three miles into the mountain before we caught a welcome glimpse of green canvas.

Here was the camp on a slope of grass in pretty Alpine surroundings. We had come to this place in the hope of finding the greater koodoo, which affects high mountain slopes overgrown with scrub. Alas! cloud lay low on the slopes the next morning, seeming to cling, as our garments do, to the thorn bushes. There was nothing for it but to go down again to the plain and seek for oryx. On my way down the ravine there were some signs of the mist lifting, and I sent Celestin and Abdullah to the top of a low ridge to look out for a clearance, and spy, while I continued on my way. I had ridden about three miles out on to the plain, and had been for some time using my telescope from the top of a hill, when I saw a single Somali, nearly naked, running at full speed towards me. Turning the glass on him I saw that it was Abdullah, steaming with perspiration, and apparently with something to

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communicate. His news was that Celestin had seen a koodoo bull! "Big one?" "Yes, big." That was enough. I was quickly in the saddle, and on my way back across the plain. Fancy the exhilaration of that hand gallop, with my followers running at my pony's tail, not less eager than I. Soon I reached the base of the hills, and climbed, panting, to Celestin's look-out place. "Mais, quel animal!" was the exclamation which greeted me; but the animal had fed over a ridge, which was distant about a mile. We hurried up the valley and over this ridge, but at a point a long way down wind of the place where he had crossed it. To follow in his tracks, which the Somalis wished to do, would probably be fatal. Far better to spy the face on to which he had gone. We crossed the next valley, and climbed up the opposite side to search, from a commanding point, the slope which faced it. A long and patient investigation with the glass revealed nothing, but there were masses of thorn-trees which might well conceal the largest animal. We then returned to the point at which we had crossed the ravine, and sought for tracks along the sandy bed at the bottom of it, to make sure that he had not passed it. While so engaged I missed Jama, and saw him just where he ought not to be, namely, high up the slope on my right, and on the way to the spot where the animal had been last seen. As he was sure to jump it if he went on, I recalled him, and we pursued our search till we were sure that the koodoo had not crossed the ravine, and it was therefore all but certain that he remained somewhere among the steep places on our right. We mounted the slope for a short distance and sat down to discuss the



A FLIGHT OF LOCUSTS.

situation and our luncheon. I invited my two shikaris to sit by me, as I feared that they would be off again, but they are shy about sitting to eat with Europeans, and walked off about thirty yards. I was still speaking to them when I saw them crouch behind a bush, gazing upwards. I knew that some quarry was in sight, but neither I nor Celestin could see anything. As we were in rather an open place I dared not move to the men, nor they to me. A Somali herdsman who had joined us was sitting a few yards to my right. He murmured something, and pointed with his finger. I felt sure that, if this was a koodoo, he must have seen us, but the animal was probably accustomed to the herdsmen, who evidently frequented this bottom, so I ventured something. Slowly getting under the cover of a thorn-tree I crept to the man's side. He again pointed upwards with his finger, almost without moving a muscle, and now, between the stems of two trees, and far above me, I saw, with the help of the glass, the double spiral which I so coveted, and great leaf-like ears on either side of them. Looking more closely I made out the long line of his back, but so hidden by scrub was he that it was impossible to tell whether he was lying or standing. Long as the shot was, it was hopeless to try and get any nearer, for he knew all about us already. As he seemed unconcerned I had time to get into a steady position on my back, and aligned the sight for the very top of his shoulder. The bullet smacked, as I believe, on a rock below him, and which perhaps partly concealed his body. Celestin said, "*Il est bien touché,*" but I felt sure that this was not so, as he remained absolutely unmoved while I reloaded. Just as I

was ready he disappeared, and we heard the clatter of rocks. In a few seconds he came into view again, crossing a slope of loose stones, which somewhat impeded him. His blue-gray body (the distinctive white spots and stripes were invisible at that distance) looked so huge that I felt that I could hardly miss such a mark, and at the second shot he manifestly winced. Before I could push in another cartridge he was over the top. We raced up that rugged cliff inspired by hope, both Celestin and the hunters declaring that I had hit him with both shots. My brown-skinned companions, agile as panthers, were soon far ahead, and one shouted back *dig*—blood. Throwing all the imperiousness I could into a gesture—I was too blown to shout—I commanded the man to stop, and we were soon together examining certain spots. Wounded he was for sure, and probably severely, but, as it was a running shot, I divined that he was hit too far back. Jama was for pursuing at once. According to their religion and customs, an animal, not secured before he expires, is so much meat lost. In a piteous tone he murmured: "Gone too far." But that was the very thing that would most likely happen if we followed immediately on the spoor. He would be sure to be watching his back tracks, and would in that case probably go right away, and die a lingering death. It was a surer and more merciful course to wait, and I was firm on the point, and curbed their impatience for over an hour. Then we took up the line, following it over the ridge and down the other side. Soon I noticed signs of the animal having stumbled. A little farther the same thing again. At length Jama, peering over a rise, stiffened suddenly, and beckoned with his finger behind



MY FIRST KOODOO.

his back. There was my poor beast standing, head down and ears drooping. Another deadly blow, and we were all hanging on to his horns to prevent his rolling over a cliff. He was a grand beast as big as a 15-hand horse, and weighed, I think, not less than 50 stone, with horns 49 inches long, measured round the curve. On the steep ground, to turn him over was a task which the united effort of four of us could not effect, and he had to be skinned down one side, and partly dismembered, before we could accomplish it. I felt myself amply repaid if I got nothing else this trip, for the koodoo carries the grandest trophies of all the Somali animals, and is, moreover, much the most difficult to secure, except perhaps an ostrich. At least the crafty old bulls, such as this one, are so. A Somali went down to fetch the pony, and to order a camel to the nearest practicable point. He also was instructed to let some of the herdsmen know, for there was more meat than we could consume in camp. On my way down an hour later I met a number of women hurrying up to get what they could. On reaching camp I was again made to feel that I was a public benefactor, and by the light of the camp fire a grand fantasia was held. Two or three of the men stamped round in a stooping position, while the remainder, who stood in a circle, clapped the time with their hands.

My companions were less pleased with Ali Maan than I was. After they had toiled long days on steep ground without any result, they had formed a low opinion of this hunting ground, and, in fact, soon after pulled up their tent pegs and departed, after appointing a meeting-place with me, a week later, in the Harrawa Valley, on the

southern side of the range. They hoped to find elephants there, and did not entirely share my scruples about shooting them. We had separate equipments, and had thus come prepared for such temporary separations.

I, on the other hand, naturally thought this the most perfect camp I had ever seen. It was both Alpine and pastoral, so that I could have fancied myself in Switzerland. The mountains rose steeply on all sides, and in the valley were grassy bottoms pastured by a large herd of cattle. These cows are handsome, sleek creatures, generally of a rich chocolate brown, with high withers, which gives them a certain affinity in appearance to the hartebeest, and large dewlaps like those of India. From the karia below I had daily presents of milk, carried in the woven baskets of the country, nor did I lack poultry of a kind. On the pleasant grass slope just outside the zareba numerous vultures, discovering that there were scraps about, strolled familiarly. If I threw out some pieces of meat they would cock their heads and run for it. Another bird of sociable habits is a small crow. They made themselves useful by tearing away the pieces of flesh which remained on the skins pegged out to dry. When one finds an extra tough morsel he hops off, and sharpens his bill by driving it several times into the ground, and then tries again. Once during a mid-day halt, when we were all stretched on the ground, and the crows believed us to be all asleep, one perched on a branch within a few feet of me to examine a rifle which leant against it. This he did, stock and lock, and finally put his eye to the muzzle, or at least seemed to do so, after which he flew off with a startled caw, which seemed to say, "I had no idea it was loaded." The most



A THREE DAYS' THIRST.

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pleasing of the tamer birds that frequent the camp is a gorgeous starling, with a back of deep metallic blue and an orange waistcoat. But the feature which gives him his perky, knowing air is his eye, which is perfectly white, on a dark background. If camp was quite quiet, they would sometimes hop within a few yards of my deck chair, amusing themselves by trying to pull the camel mats to pieces.

I now renewed my attack on the plain loving oryx. We found a fine solitary bull. When first spied he was feeding near a deserted karia. I have noticed that the antelopes and gazelles like such places. I suppose the grass is better. We watched him feed steadily down into the jungle bordering a watercourse, and easily stalked him by using the cover of the bushes. I gave him an Express bullet, and a Mannlicher on the top of that, both being in the region of the heart. Yet he ran 200 yards before he fell dead. This bull had the skin of the shoulder, which is fully three-quarters of an inch thick in this species, pierced through in several places in an encounter with a rival. The Somalis frequently begged me to give them the skins of oryx which I shot. They occupied their leisure moments in making shields out of the shoulder skin, and ropes from strips of the rest of the hide.

In the same river bed in which I killed my first oryx we found, for the first time, the fresh track of a lesser koodoo, but after following it up for some time I noticed that he had repeatedly diverged to some bush, behind which he had stood, and then gone off rapidly. I divined that, though we had not seen him, he was watching us all the time. It struck me afterwards that if I had made a

circuit of a mile or so, and returned to the river bed, leaving the Somalis to follow the track, I might have circumvented him in more senses than one, as he would be unlikely to leave the covert.

The same day I killed another oryx close to the base of the hills, and leaving the men to skin it, rode up to the native karia to tell them there was meat for them, and then proceeded to camp. I had had my bath, and was just sitting down to dinner, when a Somali came running to say that my hunters had "found a leopard." It was too late to change, and I ran off in full evening costume, which in this case consisted of the loosest of all garments. Jama had my rifle, so I was unimpeded, and made good time down the river bed for over a mile, the light going every minute. There I found my men sitting in silence on a rocky brae. When I had clambered to their side, Jama pointed at a little cliff about forty yards off, and said there was the leopard; but the sun had set half an hour, and I could see nothing. After straining my eyes for some time he hish-sh-ed at it, and something, which I had taken for a round stone, shook its ears, as cats do at a sudden noise. It was the bullet head of the beast just showing over the edge of a rock, nothing else being visible, but at that distance offering an easy mark with an adequate light. Why the beast had not departed I do not know, for the Somalis were in full view of it, but I suppose they knew that, as long as they showed themselves and sat still, he would lie quiet. No doubt it had taken up its position close to the river bed to watch the cattle as they passed to and fro to the well, and was accustomed to the proximity of men. Alas! it was now



DUR DUR AD.

too dark to see the fore-sight. I asked for the telescope sight which fits on to this rifle, and is a great assistance in a bad light. The men looked at one another, but none of them had got it. It was, in point of fact, hanging on a bush where they had skinned the oryx. I never wanted it more, but this was the only occasion when it was not forthcoming, and I had to do the best I could without it. Only the broad base of the fore-sight was visible, and I had the vaguest idea where the bullet would be planted. As I fired its impact struck a flame from the rock, visible in the darkness, and I knew that I had missed. Even then this nonchalant cat rose and stretched himself as if he were in front of the drawing-room fire, before slowly—very slowly—creeping away round the rock. It was in vain that I tried to align the sight for a second shot. The Somalis were instantly in pursuit, springing from rock to rock, I after them, and the creature was actually headed back before he had gone many yards; and there he was, now thoroughly frightened, dashing to and fro among the rocks and bushes, and all among the yelling Somalis. I think if I had had a gun which came up naturally to the shoulder, and a charge of buckshot, I might have got him; for I glimpsed him once and again within a few yards of me, but with the rifle I was not quick enough for him. At last we had him, as we thought, surrounded on a rocky tor, and while I stood on the top, the men beat every yard of it; but he must have got by in the darkness, though we thought we had barred every passage. He appeared to be about five feet long in the body, and nearly black. This may have been the effect of the gloom, but I was afterwards told that these mountain leopards are very dark in colour.

My equanimity was not restored by a rain-storm that evening, heavier than anything we had experienced. I asked the men why they did not build themselves huts like the rest of their people. They said that was "women's work," and they preferred shivering under a camel mat, or sponging on Celestin's good nature, for I found seven of them in his little Alpine tent. While the rain was pouring off the roof of my tent I guttered it into my bath, and gathered enough of distilled water to last me for drinking purposes for three weeks. The neighbourhood of the watering-places is generally foul, and bad water is probably a greater danger in this country than wild beasts. All well water, to be used for drinking, should be first treated with a pinch of alum to clear it of grosser matter, and afterwards boiled and filtered.

While at Ali Maan, I devoted several more days to the higher mountains in the hope of repeating my success with the koodoo. On the second venture I saw nothing but the little rock-haunting *klip-springer*, or *alacoot*, which is rather larger than the dik-dik.

My third attempt for koodoo was more successful. Celestin's telescope again served me well by finding a koodoo, but at too great a distance to determine its age and sex. After a long climb we reached a rocky point which commanded the corrie where he had seen it lying. After peering about for a little while, we saw on the opposite face two bull koodoo, one much larger than the other. The distance was long, but there were no means of getting nearer, as they were gazing intently in our direction, and had evidently seen something. Just then it began to drizzle, and I had difficulty in seeing



SYCAMORE FIGS.

plainly. While I hesitated whether to risk so doubtful a shot the largest bull turned away, showing only his hind-quarters, and in that position continued to move on slowly away from us, without offering another chance at his shoulder, till he disappeared among the thorn-trees. Inwardly cursing myself for not risking the chance, we moved on about fifty yards, when another, and much larger bull appeared almost on the same spot as the others had occupied, and quite unconscious of our presence. I was in no mood to hesitate again, and before the smack of the bullet reached my ears this fine animal was struggling on the ground. It was considered a great triumph for the little Mannlicher bullet, which is no thicker than a wheat straw. This bull was older and leaner than the first, and its shoulders bore the scars of many fights; but its trophies were even finer, measuring fifty-three inches round the curve, and forty from point to point.

Fortune had so favoured me at this camp that I decided not to tempt her further; besides, I was anxious to overtake my companions as soon as possible. After starting my camels, with instructions to make a short march, I went down to the plain for one more hunt, thinking to overtake the slow-moving caravan in a few hours. I succeeded in securing another oryx, but, while crossing a little nullah, the rock on which I was standing gave way, and, in the attempt to save my rifle from damage, I fell heavily with my back on a sharp rock. The camping-place agreed upon proved to be much farther than we anticipated, and the seven hours' ride over rough ground in a damaged condition was a painful

experience. Arriving some time after dark, I heard the cry of a baby in our zareba, which startled me nearly as much as the roar of a lion. It was, after all, only a Somali on his travels, with his wife and child, who had availed themselves of our protection.

Our route to Sattawa, which watering-place had been agreed upon as a tryst, lay through the tortuous ravines and rough passes of the Gadabursi Mountains, and though the distance, in a direct line by the map, seemed less than forty miles, it took us, in my partially disabled state, nearly four days to accomplish.

These valleys are richly wooded, and we again encountered cooling streams. Wherever they could get their roots down to water, noble specimens of the sycamore fig, with great ribbed trunks and welcome shade, were growing on the banks. One of these which I measured was twenty-seven feet in circumference at five feet from the ground, but still larger specimens were met with later on. At an elevation of about five thousand feet the tree-cactus, or *euphorbia*, of candelabra shape, was first met with. Owing to its fleshy leaf branches, as thick as a man's arm, this tree casts the densest shade of all, and is always welcome at mid-day. Throughout this part of the journey we daily found tracks of elephants. "Two last nights," Jama said, to express the degree of freshness; but some were more recent than that, and in one case the dung was smoking. As I had no desire to shoot them, and was anxious to rejoin the main camp, I scarcely stopped to look for them.

It was with something like dismay that, when Sattawa was reached, we found no signs of the other party, or any



GIANT EUPHORBIA.

trace of their having visited this well, nor were there any inhabitants from whom we could make inquiries. For about half the distance from Ali Maan we had followed their tracks, but at that point our guide advised us to follow a more direct route. This was an error of judgment which I now deeply regretted, as I felt quite at a loss how to find my companions. Not so my natives, who treated it lightly, and at once offered to explore in different directions, confident that they would find the missing camp by, sooner or later, crossing their track.

The country where we found ourselves, which was densely covered with forest, seemed almost gameless, and we had had no meat in camp for several days when I shot a young wart-hog. This is perhaps the most repulsive-looking animal in creation, but, as it is a grass feeder, we ventured to have pork for dinner, and it proved passably good. I am afraid this was regarded by the Somalis as a disgusting and impious act. Subsequently the skull of another specimen, which I had carefully cleaned, disappeared. I have no doubt it was clandestinely removed. In fact, they looked upon its presence in camp much as *mater familias* might regard a doubtful book on the drawing-room table. This was the only fault in which I detected my men during the trip, and it was a venial one.

My messengers in time returned, having found the track of the main caravan, and located them not more than one long day's march from Sattawa, and the following evening, having made a steady double march of nine hours, I rejoined, after a separation of ten days. My arrival was signalled by a parade of the troops and a military salute. The cause of their departure from the

programme, which had involved rather a tragic incident, was now explained. They had sent a messenger to Sattawa, who had reported no water in the well. This was untrue, but, believing it, they were compelled to change their direction to Harasawa. At this camp they waited several days, and had then gone farther south to a well called Tcherrie, or Djerrie, leaving a written message fastened to a conspicuous tree. In the meanwhile they had sent a Somali on a pony on their own back track with a letter to me. Owing to my having diverged from their trail this messenger missed me, and went all the way back to Ali Maan. Thence returning, he was nearly starved, for he had taken only two days' rations. There was a full moon, and, to recover lost time, he was travelling at night—always a dangerous thing for a solitary man to do in this country, and, to save the pony, now nearly exhausted, he was leading it by its long rope halter, when two lions sprang on the pony. The man escaped into the bushes, but soon turning, fired four barrels of a revolver which Alfred had lent to him, and which was the only weapon he carried. This was sufficient to cause the lions to retire for a short distance from the pony, who was quite dead, with its chest torn open. A Somali is more tenacious of his property than his life, so he ran in and secured the halter, which was worth perhaps twopence, and retreated as fast as he could. He arrived very exhausted at the Tcherrie camp about the same time as we did. At first we were somewhat sceptical of this story, but it was confirmed in various ways. We sent for the rope and found blood on it. Two days later two messengers from the Resident came through by the same



A NOBLE WRECK.

route, and reported that they had been followed by lions about the same spot; and at a later date another party saw fresh lion tracks thereabouts. The man did his best to persuade us to return and avenge the fright he had had. We were afterwards sorry we had not done so, as neither Alfred nor I were fortunate enough to secure a lion. But at the time we were disinclined to return a considerable distance on our tracks.

Tcherrie was a beautiful camp. Fancy a maze of rocky glens, and at their junction a wide hollow with a lawn of short green grass sloping to the river bed. On this park-like ground are scattered three or four sycamore fig-trees. The trunk of one of them, though a mere wreck of its former self, carried wide-spreading branches, and the shell enclosed a hollow twelve feet in diameter. Between two of the largest trees lay a wide, deep pool, which I suppose had at some time been artificially excavated below the level of the river bed, and always contained water. This ancient well was the daily resort of large herds of cattle from the neighbouring karias. They are not permitted to enter the water. Hahns are filled with water, and passed up from hand to hand, and poured into a skin attached to four sticks, round which the thirsty beasts jostle one another.

Inside the hollow tree, which formed a cool and convenient bower, I was shown a clutch of eleven ostrich eggs, which Alfred had found that morning. They were not "sat upon," if that expression can be correctly applied to ostrich's eggs, and the contents could be extracted through the blow-hole without spoiling the shell. The resulting omelette was of first-rate quality, and of satis-

fying dimensions. While in this neighbourhood we relied a good deal on this form of diet, for the natives often brought more eggs for sale. Each egg weighed 4 lbs., of which the meat accounted for $2\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.

My companions had, so far, been less successful than I, except that they had some capital heads of the lesser koodoo, which I had not seen, but my return brought luck, for the same day Alfred secured a small cheetah and a good bull koodoo. The Gadabursi people were less friendly in manner to us and our people than men of other tribes whom we had encountered. Their allegiance to us has, I believe, been more doubtful than that of other tribes, which is perhaps accounted for by the fact that the Abyssinians claim this district. I believe that recent negotiations with Ras Makunna have resulted in the claim being in part allowed.

Such watering-places as the one I have described are a frequent bone of contention. A Somali of mine got into trouble with a Gadabursi over the drawing of water, and received a slight spear thrust in the arm. The delinquent was secured and disarmed, and held in captivity till my return to camp, when he was arraigned before me. He sat on his heels after the manner of these people, apparently expecting to have his throat cut; but after admonishing him, through the interpreter, of the iniquity of even scratching a Somali in the service of an Englishman, I returned him his weapons, and compelled him to shake hands with the wounded man. I had indeed no means of knowing which was the aggressor. The Gadabursi who had guided us hither was a very rough savage. He boasted of having slain six men—two of them at this



WATERING CATTLE.

very well. When asked why he had killed them, he said that he found them asleep, and implied that the opportunity was too good to be lost. Among his own people at any rate he was considered to have distinguished himself, and to have a certain repute to keep up. We therefore selected him, as the most responsible person available, to convey our letters to the coast.

While at Tcherrie we heard of an extraordinary catastrophe which had just happened to an Englishman and his wife, about seventy miles to the south. They were after zebras, and had made a hunting zareba, *i.e.* a small and strong enclosure, five or six feet in diameter, which commanded the track of those animals. In this they and their two shikaris lay up for the night. They must have been asleep, when the lady, hearing a noise, roused her husband, who struck a light, when they found that the head shikari was missing, and now they could hear a lion crunching his bones within a few feet of them. He must have been dragged out without awakening the rest of the party! He could not have left the shelter of his own accord, as the zareba was so arranged that it could only be opened or closed from the outside, and this fact compelled them to remain helpless while this ghastly meal proceeded, and until their signal shots brought their men from the camp.

Tcherrie is only a short distance below the edge of the plateau which extends for hundreds of miles to the southward. Being waterless at this season of the year it is then practically without inhabitants. This portion of it is called the Marar Prairie, and supports large herds of game. From Tcherrie an hour's walk up a ravine landed

me on its edge. On passing the last rising ground the bush quickly thins out, and there, at a level of 6000 feet or thereabouts, there stretches the vast "ban," or treeless plain of grass, scorched to a pale yellow. The only breaks in the level horizon are the Makunis Hill to the southwest, and one other. The first thing I saw was a pair of ostriches on the edge of the thorn jungle. We vainly tried to stalk them. Each time that, after carefully creeping behind bushes, we reached the point from which we had expected to shoot, they were discovered striding away out of range, the black wings of the cock bird generally showing in front, or calmly feeding half a mile off. Owing to their sharpness of sight, the ostrich, who seems to be well informed of the value of his feathers in the Aden market, is perhaps more difficult to stalk than any antelope. Personally, I never succeeded in getting within fair shooting distance of any of them. Next I made out a small herd of *sig*, or hartebeest, looking very black on the pale expanse. Though a mile off, the high withers and sloping back were unmistakable. I managed to put them away, but in crossing the spot where they had been feeding, a calf jumped up bleating from his couch in the grass. He was in the staggering stage of infancy, and looked an easy prey, but I was soon left behind. My hunters, who are fine runners, were also outpaced. Then my syce, coming on the scene with the pony, jumped up and joined in the pursuit. He pressed his horse to a gallop for at least a quarter of an hour before I saw him in the distance jump from its back and try to grab the poor little thing. But it started again, and was not secured until after another long spurt. This calf could



THE CAPTIVE.

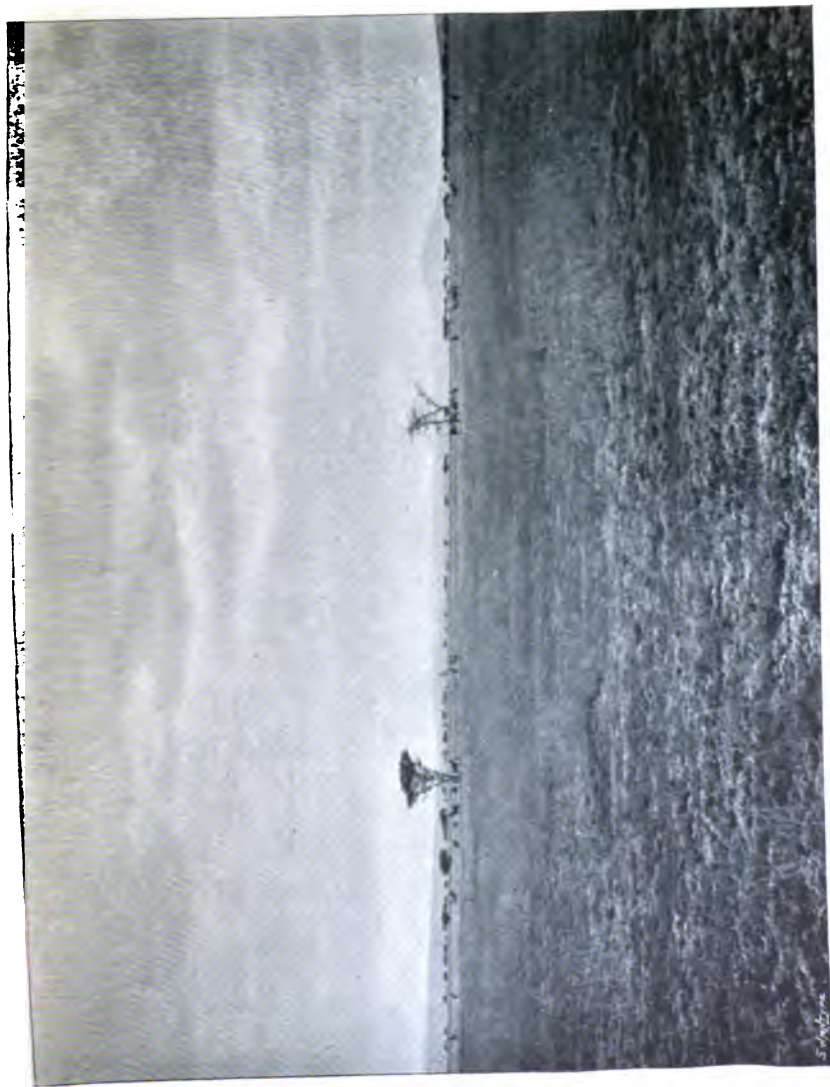
not have been more than three days old, but the hartebeest is said to have the best wind of any animal that runs. Some Midgans camping near brought us a welcome drink of water. One of them had an ancient military rifle, the only gun I saw in the possession of natives while I was away from the coast. His companions were armed with the usual Midgan weapons—bows and poisoned arrows. These bows correspond exactly with an ancient Egyptian bow in my possession, taken from a very early tomb, and appear to be of the same wood. The Somali arrows are about twelve inches long. The poison is made from the juice of a plant and looks like black wax. It is applied just behind the arrow head. The Midgans, or bushmen, who are supposed to be the original inhabitants of the land, are despised by the Somalis, but they are undoubtedly very capable hunters, and are said to destroy large quantities of game, and even elephants, with these futile-looking weapons. They are fair shots up to thirty or forty yards. I do not know whether the range of the old musket which this party possessed was greater; but they had meat in camp, and the game in the neighbourhood had been made very wild, and consequently I quite failed, on that day, to get near the *sig*, as the Somalis called the hartebeest.

The afternoon was not therefore wasted, for the scene was a striking one. Several herds of *sig* and of *aoul*, who frequently feed in company with them, were in sight. The sleek coats of the former, of a deep chocolate brown, gave them the appearance of herds of deer in a park, only that the park was as large as the Eastern Counties. The air was perfectly still in the middle of the day, and tall

dust columns, which seemed to be nearly stationary, were seen here and there on the vast expanse. Then there was rather a sudden change, and heavy blue thunderstorms coursed across it, while we remained in sunshine. Presently there was another change, for the Midgans had lighted the dry grass in several places, I suppose to improve its quality when the rainy season should begin ; and a few minutes later a line of flame, a mile long, was licking along the surface before the wind, sending up a huge banner of coppery smoke. Clouds of grasshoppers and other insects were escaping in front of the smoke, which so confused a large hyena that he nearly ran over us, as we sat, in his hasty flight.

Returning to camp, I found my little sig, whom I had sent home immediately after his capture, partly reconciled to his surroundings. I purchased a milch goat for his nourishment. He would not suck this foster-mother, but soon learnt to lap the milk from a saucer. The next day it was perfectly tame, but whether from an insufficient supply of milk, or some other cause, it died on the fourth day.

We now determined to move the camp up to the plateau, and I escorted Nellie thither. Alfred started early, purposing to meet us at a point which the men were supposed to have agreed upon. We found a suitable camp, but the day waned and Alfred failed to put in an appearance. We fired rifles as signals, and after sunset lighted fires on rising ground. We sat round the Somalis' fire, and tried to learn what they thought had happened. They made light of it, and all laid themselves out to amuse Nellie and distract her thoughts.



HARTEBEST ON THE MARAR PRAIRIE.

She thought it probable that, finding he had missed the camp, he had returned to Tcherrie where Ted remained to hunt koodoo. I put it to the men whether some of them would volunteer to return and bring us news. They justly said it was very unsafe to travel at night, but if four of them went together they would undertake it. In the middle of the night they returned with the news that he was at the lower camp. This service was quite outside their round of duties, and was undertaken only to relieve her anxiety.

Within reach of this camp were large herds of hartebeest and Soemmering's gazelle scattered over the plain. The two species very frequently feed together. One herd of hartebeest, which was feeding among the thorn-trees, got our wind and galloped past me in a long string. I sat down and counted them. There were over two hundred. Owing to the absence of covert it is not easy to get within sporting range in the open. I found that the best way was to walk behind a camel, and direct its course so as to pass the herd at a distance of about 200 yards; then, when the nearest point was attained, I sat down, without halting the camel, which passed on with its attendant Somali, and served to distract attention. This manoeuvre is most successfully resorted to in the heat of the day when the animals stand in groups under the scattered thorn-trees which invade the edge of the plain, and are unwilling to leave their scanty shade. I succeeded in getting some tolerable snap-shots with my kodak at about the usual sporting range. There are other difficulties besides the absence of covert on a plain like this. Distances are deceptive, and one is apt to underestimate them, hence a small bullet and flat trajectory is of great value. Once while on the march I got a very good

buck aoul by a lucky shot. He was standing clear of the herd, and I coveted his fine head. I jumped off my pony, and all my Somalis, to the number of fourteen, gathered in a line behind me to watch the shot. I estimated the distance at about 250 yards, and sighted accordingly. The bullet struck the ground many yards in front of him, but ricochetting, struck the animal high up in the back, and Jama, jumping on to his pony, quickly had him at bay. The horns of the aoul are generally curved backwards, something like those of a chamois, but in this case the points were turned forwards, which added to their value in my eyes. Some might think that shooting at these long ranges is unsportsmanlike, but on the plain, and provided there is no shooting into the "brown," it is not so, because if a pony and a light-weight Somali be kept somewhere in the rear, a wounded animal may be galloped down, and secured with tolerable certainty. The dead grass varies from two to three feet in height and when the sportsman is seated on the ground for a steady shot, the game is apt to be hidden by it. To obviate this I made Abdullah, my second hunter, carry a low camp stool, a form of luxury for which I apologise, while I am ever grateful for the idea. So was Abdullah, for he conceived a notion of utilising it as an umbrella, carrying it reversed with the legs pointing skyward. On one occasion I was stalking some gerenook, and had kept myself well concealed, when to my surprise they departed as if the devil was at their heels, looking round I saw Abdullah fifty yards behind, having the appearance of an abnormally tall man with the head of a stag, but quite unconscious of his borrowed inches.

Though the subject is trite, the assembling of vultures



HE DIED IN THE OPEN.

1

on a kill interested me greatly. I remember one occasion in particular, when an oryx which I had shot died on the open plain, so that the skinning operations were visible for miles. There was a solitary thorn-tree near, every available perch on which was soon occupied, and each fresh arrival shook off one or more of those who had taken reserved seats. The dispossessed ones waddled about on the ground, stretching their necks to watch the process of disembowelment. A far larger and ever increasing number wheeled in the air, some at an immense height. Before we had left the carcase a stone's throw behind at least a hundred of them dropped beside it, and the next instant the scene was almost hidden in a cloud of dust raised by their greedy frenzy and the flapping of wings. Two little foxes, slightly more suspicious of man, hesitated a few minutes longer. Then, seeing that their chances were rapidly disappearing, raced for their meal.

Notwithstanding the incident of the loss of the pony described above, I do not think that there were many lions here on the Marar Prairie. At least I saw few traces, and never once heard one roar. This was surprising, as the hartebeest, which were so numerous hereabouts, are a favourite prey of lions, who, after gorging themselves upon a successful kill, will sometimes lie up for the day on the plain. Some of the best bags of lions have been made by galloping such outliers to a standstill; and with a squad of well-mounted Somalis a lion on the plain is soon brought to bay. We were constantly on the look-out for such chances, but they did not come to us. The fact was we were too near the edge of the plain, and the rocky ground on the north was so close at hand that the lions

naturally sought their retreat there. On such stony ground tracking is almost impossible.

The alternative was to sit up at night over a donkey tied to a stake. My companions tried this, and, having done so, came to my opinion that they would have been happier in bed. Once I made my way to a conspicuous bluff about two miles away from the edge of the plain, and well into the bush. This was a good look-out place, for it commanded a wide cup-shaped valley fairly free from scrub. A patient search was rewarded by an interesting and successful stalk of an oryx. Afterwards, turning homewards across the hollow, the surface of which was free from stones, we observed the fresh track of a *sig*. It arrested attention, as it was far from the usual haunts of this animal, which naturally abides on the plain. This was accounted for by the track, equally fresh, of a lion, which had evidently been pursuing it. Doubtless he had succeeded in separating it from the herd and driving it across the intervening rocky ground. The tragedy was writ large on the yielding soil. The poor antelope, judging by his straddling gait, with occasional breaks into short, frantic gallops, must have been fully aware of his impending fate, and had nearly run his race. His pursuer had maintained a stealthy course, always taking advantage of long grass and other covert, and, if this came to an end, arresting his advance abruptly by driving all four feet deeply into the sand. We followed for some way, and I should have liked to have read the *denouement*, which could not be far off; but we came to hard ground, where the story was difficult to decipher, and being several miles from camp, and the time near sunset, I had to imagine the rest.



WAITING FOR DINNER.

That was, as far as I know, the nearest approach to an interview with a lion which I attained. No doubt, with longer time at our disposal, and more abundant water-carrying power, we could have penetrated farther into the Haud. We should in that case have made fairly sure of finding the court of the king, and might have waged successful war upon him. For my part my time, being limited, was likely to be more profitably spent in securing a tolerably complete collection of the antelopes and gazelles of the country. Although the exhilarating air at this elevated position, and the abundance of game on the open plain, made the Marar Prairie a most interesting camping ground, when I had secured three bull hartebeest and the same number of buck aoul, there was no temptation to go on killing for the sake of multiplying specimens. Moreover, about this time we received rather an urgent message from the Resident at Zeila to keep away from the Abyssinian frontier, distant about thirty miles. The Italian war was then at its height, and trouble was feared in that quarter. We therefore decided to move slowly eastwards towards Hargeisa.

Being especially anxious to secure the graceful lesser koodoo, which had hitherto eluded me, I again separated from my companions, and re-entered the bush country where these animals are found. Owing to a certain sluggishness of vision, I am a poor performer in the thicket, and generally failed to see the dun-coloured bodies standing in dun-coloured shadow, unless it were the vanishing flick of their tails; and in addition to my own mistakes, a succession of mishaps pursued me, of which the most annoying was to plant bullets, on two occasions, in branches

which intervened between me and the body of my quarry, but which I failed to see in the gloom of the jungle. I made matchwood of the timber, but the bullets were broken up and deflected. The striped flank of the lesser koodoo makes such an oversight easier than it seems. The charm of this sport, whether successful or not, lies in the skilful tracking of the animal by the shikaris. On the hardest ground they would pick it out where I could see no sign whatever. But even their patience gives out when their chief is so obviously under a curse as I appeared to them to be. One snap-shot dropped a buck, but it was so small a one that I was sorry I had fired, and it was not till a fortnight later that my perseverance was rewarded with a single fair specimen. On the mountains near Halisa I obtained the klipspringer, or allacoot, to give it its local name ; and on the plain, the plateau gazelle. The former, which is found on steep rocky places from the Cape to Suakim, is about half the size of a chamois, and somewhat resembles that animal in his habits. He is clad in short bristly hair, which falls out very easily, and which must make the creature nearly as unpleasant to eat as a hedgehog. Perhaps this serves as a protection in the exposed positions which he occupies. The gazelle of the plateau has a triple fold of loose skin on the nose, which gives him a peculiar expression. My Somalis declared to me that he can inflate this bag at will, and emits a sound with it, but of this fact I had no other evidence, and I give it with great reserve.

The hard work which I did in my vain pursuit of the lesser koodoo, and the close atmosphere of the bush, combined to bring on an attack of fever. Though it did

not last, it left me with muscles so sore and skin so tender, that I was partly incapacitated thenceforth from active exertion, and turned my thoughts as well as my steps homewards. According to the opinion of the ship's doctor, whom I afterwards consulted, the severe blow to which I have referred predisposed me to this attack. I am told that such a shock sometimes has this effect. At any rate visitors to Somaliland, unless weakened by some such cause, do not often suffer in that way.

Nearly three weeks had elapsed since I had sent Hadji on my running camel with letters to the coast at Zeila. He had orders to await the mail and return with it, and his long delay had caused us many misgivings. Had the solitary rider fallen among thieves, or was he faithless, or had his swift camel broken down? We had almost given him up, when one day, in the jungle, we came upon the fresh track of a camel. Simultaneously my men exclaimed, "Hadji is here." There was no hesitation about it. They were as sure of the identity of this particular camel, from his track, as I should be of a friend whose face I recognised in the crowd. Soon we found Hadji himself contentedly chewing dates under a tree. He on his part had observed traces of us, and having found us, there was no reason why he should not eat up the rest of the dates in his possession. By what "homing" instinct he made his way to us—apparently by a line as straight as a bee to its hive—I was unable to divine. Perhaps the art lies, not in a bee-line at all, but in extended zigzags across the probable line of the track which is sought. From the Marar Prairie we moved eastwards, either together or on parallel courses, but keeping within reach of the line of

watering-places at the edge of the plateau. It is rather a monotonous district, and when we were there game was scarce.

Throughout it great flocks are herded near the wells in the winter months, when the Haud is waterless; consequently food was scarce, and our camels suffered much. Several were always on the sick list, and some had to be abandoned. One of them went completely off its head—probably from sunstroke—and ran a-muck among the other camels. My men advised that it should be killed before it did any damage; and this done, they cut him up and cooked him. Though we had eaten our stores to a minimum transport became a difficulty, and our marches were very slow. Every green thing seemed eaten up, except the “irgen” bushes, which are of a brilliant colour, and have a most succulent appearance, but are poisonous, and are avoided by the native camels. My running camel, unfortunately, came from a country where this deadly shrub is unknown. Not having the inherited instinct he ate of the forbidden fruit, and for many hours his life was despaired of. Ultimately he was supposed to have been saved by soup made from the tail of a fat-tailed sheep. This is a popular panacea with the Somalis. Part of the remedy consists in themselves devouring the rest of the sheep. I found there was nothing like mutton to keep my dusky followers in good humour.

My ragged little ponies had sore backs, and some of my Somalis were also under treatment for one cause or another. What with this and my own shaky condition, my section of the party were in rather a sorry plight when we arrived at Hargeisa. Here we were all together for

the last time. Ted went off into the Haud to secure a lion, and ultimately returned with his ambition satisfied. The rest of us, still moving eastwards along the range, reached the neighbourhood of the Jerato Pass. Here I finally separated from my companions and made for the coast at Berbera.

From close to my camp at Digwein, Celestin spied the biggest bull koodoo that ever was seen ; but by no stretch of imagination could I make it out to be beyond the limits of the Reserve—so I let him be. This virtuous act deserved some reward ; and when, on the eve of leaving the mountains to cross the plain, I had one more chance to secure a lesser koodoo buck, the temptation was not to be resisted. I consider that this beast cost me more time and labour than all the rest of my trophies put together, and I value his pretty head accordingly the more because he was poached. Both my brothers-in-arms, who are smarter riflemen than I, had easily secured several good specimens of this kind long before. I also added the gazelle of the plains, *Pelzelni*, which is not found outside the Reserve, to my other trophies. That was the last shot I fired ; it was a happy fluke at extreme range, which quite reinstated me in the good opinion of my shikaris. It completed my collection of antelopes, of which I had obtained every kind possible—ten in all. My list comprised greater and lesser koodoos, oryx, hartebeest, gerenook, klipspringer, plateau gazelle and plains gazelle, aoul, and dik dik. There are two other species in Somaliland—the dibatag and baira, but neither of these is found in the country traversed by me.

I had been fifty days away from the coast, of which

about ten were spent in crossing the Reserve. I estimated that we had marched about 350 miles.

It is often asked whether the game of Somaliland is likely to be shot out. I do not think that this will soon happen at the hands of legitimate sportsmen. The Consul-General of the Somali coast, who resides at Aden, very properly requires a return from each party of the game killed by them, and, as regards most kinds, the totals do not amount to such a number as should make an appreciable difference over so large an area. Moreover, the majority of animals killed by sportsmen are males. The following is the list, as furnished to me by Col. Ferris, of animals bagged by the hunting parties who entered the country from Berbera, Bulhar, or Zeila, from April 1895 to March 1896 inclusive. The list includes many killed beyond the British Protectorate:—

Elephant	23	Gazella Spekei	31
Lion	41	Gazella Walleri (gerenook)	119
Lioness	24	Gazella Soemmeringi (aoul)	236
Rhinoceros	43	Clarke's Gazelle (dibatag)	6
Leopard	22	Klipspringer (allacoot)	7
Panther	3	Dik dik	60
Zebra	40	Ostrich	4
Wild ass	5	Wart-hogs	26
Hartebeest (sig)	66	Cheetah	1
Greater koodoo (godir)	26	Waterbuck	6
Lesser koodoo	38	Giraffe	1
Oryx Beisa (beit)	209	Various	53
Gazella Pelzelni (dhero)	32		

Some there are, unworthy of the name of sportsmen, who shoot recklessly. It is reported, for instance, that one person—an Englishman, I regret to say—killed 30



A "TUG" AND RIVER BANK VEGETATION.

elephants in one season, most of them cows or immature animals, and another—not an Englishman—found pleasure in destroying as many zebras, but such men are the exception, and the growing public opinion on this subject exercises a wholesome restraint. Elephants certainly require special protection, owing to the ease with which they are driven out, and I am glad to think that they have received it. Perhaps the greater koodoo, which inhabits a limited area, should receive the same consideration. No doubt large quantities of game are killed by the Somali tribes, and especially by the Midgans, with poisoned arrows; but this has gone on for centuries without materially diminishing the numbers. Of course, if the Somali tribes ever obtain rifles, as the Abyssinians have done, the case would be altered, and undoubtedly immense numbers have been poured into Jibouti in the course of the veiled war which the French have been waging against Italy.

At my last camp, ten miles from Berbera, the telescope revealed a steamer lying in the harbour. Making a forced march, I arrived late in the evening in time to receive a friendly invitation from Colonel Ferris, the Consul-General, to accompany him on his official round to the coast stations in the Government gunboat; but the business of settling up is not to be so hastily transacted, and she had to leave before I was ready. Three luxurious days spent in the cool rooms of the Residency, during which I enjoyed the hospitality of the Resident and Mrs. Merewether, proved the most agreeable tonic. It was followed by an experience which by contrast enhanced the pleasant retrospect. When the *Tuna* arrived her deck was

packed, literally to suffocation, with sheep. One could not pass from the limited quarter-deck to the tiny cabin without treading on their backs. Several of them had died before we reached Aden. The skipper, who had been drunk on our outward voyage, was drunk again, but more so; and violent struggles took place between him and the engineer for possession of the speaking tube. I was scarcely surprised when, three months later, I heard that the *Tuna* had gone down with all hands.

I have attached to this chapter a map which is transcribed from that prepared under the direction of Mr. A. E. Pease, M.P., to whom I am indebted for the loan of it. It is unfortunate that questions of space prevented my reproducing the whole of it. I have shown on it the present boundaries of the Aden Reserve, within which only officers of the Aden garrison are allowed to shoot. The Gadabursi country has been added to the Reserve since the date of our visit. I have indicated as many of the permanent watering-places as I could hear of, but there are probably others of which I have no record.

The treaty with the Emperor Menelek has lately been published. As it is unaccompanied by a map, and our concession of a strip of territory to that monarch is of interest to travellers, I have traced the new and the old boundary. It should be noted that the latter was the result of an agreement between ourselves and the Italians, and was never admitted by the Abyssinians.

This is not the place to express a final judgment on the new arrangement, necessitated by the abandonment by the Italians of their protectorate over Abyssinia. Yet I may venture to make one or two remarks. Those who

know the country will observe that the belt of territory now abandoned by us to Abyssinia is almost waterless for nine months in the year, and therefore cannot be of great commercial importance, yet it affords good pasturage in the rainy season. Sportsmen will undoubtedly regret the loss of the Harrawa valley and the Marar Prairie to the British sphere of influence, and naturalists will deplore the fact that the Elephant Sanctuary, already too small, is still further restricted. Another point of importance is that armed parties are expressly forbidden to cross the frontier. As no parties are allowed to leave the coast which are *not* armed, this will limit the scope of travellers and sportsmen. Indeed there is not much good hunting-ground left between the Aden Reserve and the boundary as now agreed with the Abyssinians.

A much more important question would appear to be the political position of the vast territory to the south of our protectorate as far as the Juba River. This has hitherto been included in the Italian protectorate, though their occupation of it was never effective, and the tribes to a great extent acknowledged British influence. The terms of the treaty delimit our frontiers with the Abyssinians to the south as well as to the west, implying, as it seems to me, that *they* are now our neighbours on that side. This enormous transfer of territory, if it has taken place, together with numerous tribes, from our allies to the tender mercies of the Abyssinians, has, so far, been received almost *sub silentio*. When understood it will undoubtedly cause pain to those who know and like the Somali tribesmen. These people trust the English, and, whether reasonably or not, look to us to save them from

oppression. The sentiment is undoubtedly a far-reaching one. Quite recently Mr. Cavendish has recounted that the Boran Gallas, who live many hundred miles to the south of our protectorate, besought him to lay a petition before the "Great Chief of the English." Their king said, "You rule in Somaliland. Somalis are happy. We want to be under your chiefs." Moreover this hinterland, comprising a territory as large as the United Kingdom, has some importance for us, because it lies between our two spheres of influence—British East Africa and Somaliland—and many think that this way lies the best route, though not the shortest, to the great lakes, owing to its freedom from "fly." At any rate, trade routes traverse it and converge on Berbera. Our interest lies in the protection of these trade routes, upon which the supplies of Aden depend, from inter-tribal raids, and the predatory incursions of Abyssinians. If this great slice of Africa is to form part of Menelek's Equatorial Province, and if the boasts of Prince Henry of Orleans are to be believed, we are soon to see that itinerant soldier of fortune established there as the French proconsul of his Ethiopian majesty, "labouring," as he himself has said, "in the interests of France." We should then see how long it would remain an Abyssinian province. I do not suggest that we should extend our sphere of influence to regions and to tribes which we cannot control. The fact that we hold the outlets to trade on the coast, which are the keys of the country, is doubtless of more consequence to our position than colouring red large sections of territory on the map. But when full allowance has been made for this, it must be admitted that, excellent as the administration of Somali-

land has been, it has suffered from the poverty of the Indian Exchequer. Though the Bombay officials may be right, from their point of view, to regard that country merely as a sort of private farm for the supply of butcher's meat to the Aden garrison, economy may be carried too far. If India cannot afford the luxury of a Colonial policy, it is time that Imperial funds should be contributed for Imperial reasons. The damage which we suffer in repute by being too weak to speak in the gate with the conquering "Lion of Judah" is not confined to a few miles of coast. Better withdraw than remain under sufferance of Ras Makunan. For the sake of our credit we cannot afford to hold a Protectorate which we cannot afford to protect.

Whether we "peg out claims for posterity" or not, it is a subject of greater pride that two or three trained Englishmen, resident on the coast, at wide distances apart, without a force at their backs, except about seventy native police, practically govern a great territory, which we have never annexed, by that mysterious influence which we are pleased to call the magic of the English name. Tribal wars are quelled, criminals brought in, quarrels settled by the attractive power of just administration seated at Berbera and those wonderful arts of government of subject races, which have their most perfect development in the Anglo-Indian official.

The numerous English hunting parties who penetrate deep into the country have done much to enhance this influence. In their dealings with the natives they always pay, never maltreat, and their word comes true. Thus their successors are repaid with a full measure of confidence which is not always extended to those of other nations.

II

TIMBER CREEPING IN THE CARPATHIANS

"IN Karpaten we should call that good second class," was the remark of my companion in the gallery of the Natural History Museum, when I showed him the beautiful head of a red-deer from the Caucasus which I had hitherto regarded as the *ne plus ultra* of grace and strength. With a trace of incredulity, I replied that if that was second class I should like to see a first-class head. "Well," said my friend, "I cannot promise you that. They are not common like your Scotch stags, and the forest is wide. Last year we had seven stags, big and little, and the year before six. Besides that, if you *do* see one you *may* possibly not shoot it. Still, I will promise that you shall have a good dinner every day." Now, as the strongest passion in the human breast, next to the desire for a good dinner, is to shoot an animal with horns a trifle longer than those possessed by anybody else, it will be readily understood with what eagerness I accepted the invitation of my host to visit him in his forest in Galicia, where, as he told me, these giants existed.

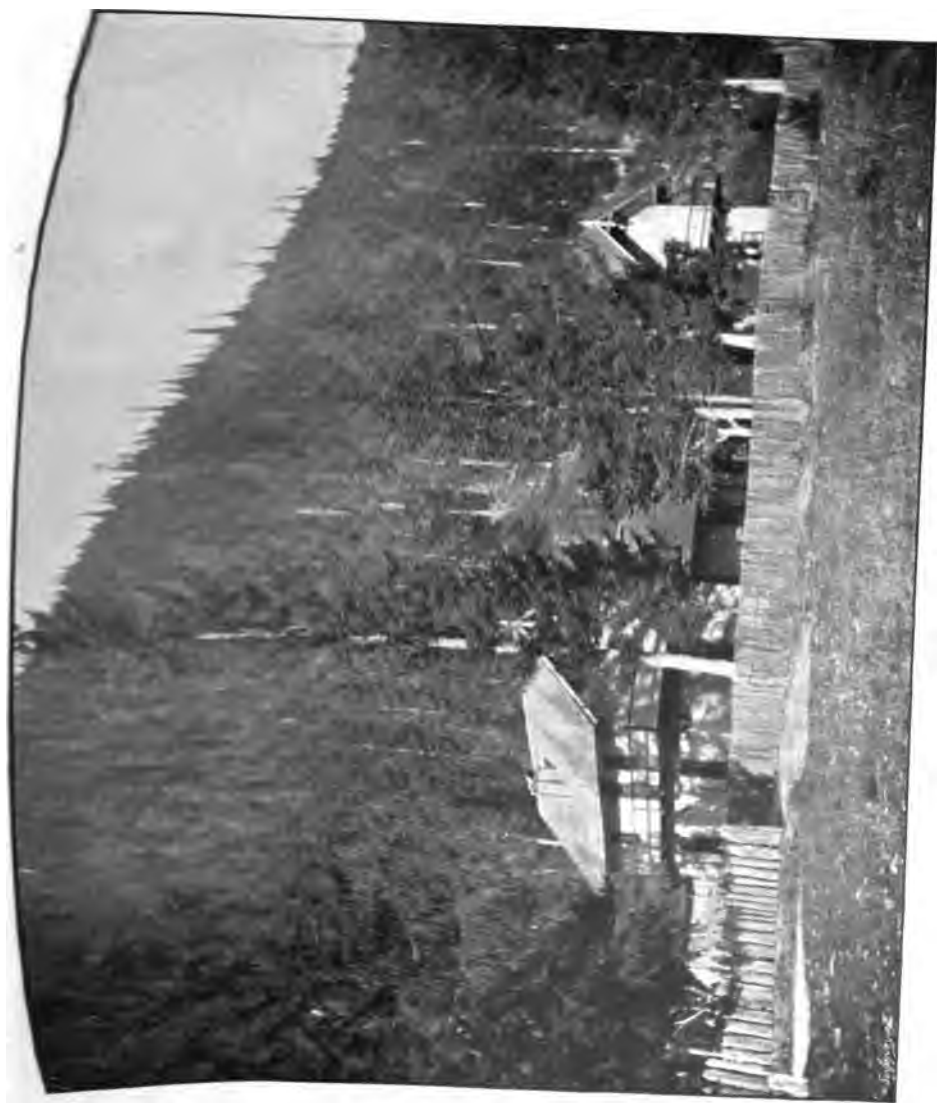
As Highland red-deer exceed the island deer, so they

in turn are surpassed by those of Germany, and again, travelling eastward, the stags which inhabit the Carpathian Forest greatly excel the finest Bavarian or Styrian stags in weight and strength of antler. There is no fixed line of demarcation to the west of which the deer can be described as red-deer, and to the east of it as belonging to some larger race. Whether the *Olen* or *Maral* of the Caucasus and Asia Minor, which is practically indistinguishable from the deer of the Carpathians, is of still larger growth is a doubtful point. From some skull measurements which I have taken, and antlers which I have seen, it would seem to follow the same law. Some think that this increased size bears an inverse ratio to the numerical abundance of the herds. The German forests support but a fraction of the "head" which may be seen on an equivalent area in Sutherland or Inverness; and, in the regions which I am about to describe, the winter ravages by wolves still further thin the ranks of the deer. The abundance of food and its quality must tell, but in my host's opinion these deer owe their massive frames, in part at least, to the fact that their family cares are light, for each stag has no more than two or three wives to disturb his domestic peace.

It is a far cry from the north of Scotland to the eastern spurs of the Carpathian Mountains, which may be described as the keystone of Hungary, Poland, and Russia. I had been travelling continuously from early on Tuesday morning till the middle of Saturday, and my impressions of Central Europe are somewhat vague. I seem to remember an interminable plain without landmarks, an endless vista of scarlet-trousered and scarlet-petticoated peasants, haycocks, and the sweeping motion of the scythe,

white-washed cottages, Indian corn, yellow gourds, flocks of geese, and abominable roads.

About two hundred miles east of Cracow, the ancient capital of Poland, I turned off from the main line, and, following one of the military railways by which, in the event of war, the Austrian troops would be concentrated on their eastern boundary, I crept up among the spurs of the Carpathians. By mid-day I found myself ensconced in a roomy wooden *Jagdhaus*, surrounded by a domain of four hundred square miles of pine-covered forest, under the guidance of a host who takes his chief pleasure in the pleasure of his guests, and with brother sportsmen not less keen than myself. The party had assembled five days earlier, and here in the porch were already some trophies calculated to quicken the pulses of the sportsman fresh from the degenerate specimens of Ross-shire. One very long and heavy fourteen-pointer, splendidly "guttered" and "pearled," produced in me that vile envy which we cannot always suppress. Even more interesting was a heap of shed antlers, gathered in various parts of the wood since the previous season—more interesting since the owners of these massive crowns presumably still lived and roamed, and might, if the fates were propitious, be encountered by me. Yet how remote the chance seemed when one looked at this vast range of black forest, and remembered that, taking the bags of previous years, only one stag, on an average, to sixty square miles had been obtained. The thing would be well-nigh hopeless but for one circumstance. It was the 20th of September and the height of the season of conflict, when every warrantable stag gives notice, far and wide, of his whereabouts, and of his willingness to engage in battle with any rival.



The day following my arrival, being an off day for the rest of the party, I devoted to a preliminary inspection of the forest near the house in the company of the head forester. Gloom and monotony is the prevailing characteristic of such a forest. Scarcely once in the course of a four hours' walk along a steep hill-side was I able to see the opposite side of the valley. The only clearances are where some hurricane has cut a gap, upsetting everything in its road, and piling broken and twisted branches to a height of fifteen or twenty feet. The forest is composed mainly of spruce, interspersed with drawn-up beeches, and a proportion of silver firs which attain noble dimensions.

The first thing that happened was that my feet slipped from under me, with startling swiftness, on a smooth trunk, and the second thing was to fall again, sliding on a greasy root. I was beginning to learn something. `Rubber soles would not do here, but I felt sadly humiliated—before the *head* forester too! Then I exhibited my ignorance by asking the purpose of a trough, roughly carved out of a trunk and sunk in the ground. Of course it was a salt lick. The hollow is filled with rock salt and clay, and the deer smell it and taste it, and return to the place. Certain shallow pits, which had the appearance of old sawpits, puzzled me next, until I made them out to be the sites of trees, uprooted centuries back, whose stems and roots had long ago rotted and disappeared. And then the millions of trees on the ground! The essential feature of the whole region for the hunter to consider is the fallen timber. This constitutes his chief difficulty. It covers every yard of the surface with stems and branches in all stages of decay. It is these fallen giants, many of which are of

surprising girth and length, that charm, with their weird skeleton points, their wealth of green moss and gray lichen, and the story which they have to tell of the forces of nature, more than their brethren which still stand erect. Some have lain so long that, though retaining their shape, they consist only of spongy wood and pulp. Such ancient boles form seed-beds for young trees, and it is a common sight to see a perfectly straight hedge of juvenile spruces forty yards long, literally growing in, and feeding on the body of their prostrate ancestor.

To traverse this maze there are certain tracks, indicated by blaze marks on the trees, and locally called "plyj," or "Steige" in German. These avoid the worst intricacies. The deer also, who dislike obstacles nearly as much as men do, to a great extent learn to use these lines of least resistance as passes. As long as one keeps to the "Steige" the work is easy. If one has to leave it, as, for instance, to approach a calling stag, it is gymnastics all the way. I followed one of these tracks for some hours, trying to learn the velvet tread. There is a foot-sensitiveness which can be cultivated by practice, and which is the more necessary as the eyes must all the time be alert to search the depths of shadow ahead. The ears, too, must be tuned to catch the slightest indication of sound. The stillness is almost oppressive. Among these closely-ranked stems there is scarcely any movement of air. Neither is there much sound of life. In the course of a long morning I saw only one hazel-hen, the smallest of the perching grouse, and heard once or twice the beating flight overhead of some capercailzie, as he dashed out on the opposite side of a tall spruce. Besides these I remember only black squirrels and



A KLAUSE.

a few tom-tits. But of the noblest game of Europe signs were not wanting. Here was an area, some ten yards square, trampled and torn with hoofs and horns—a *Brunftplatz* where the lord of the herd had expended his surplus passion on sticks and brambles. Close by was a black wallowing pit, with the impress of his great body where he last rolled in it, and tossed lumps of mire yards away. Of the deer themselves I neither saw nor heard anything, though we found the fresh track of a stag which may have been disturbed by us; and now my native follower brought out from the recesses of his rucksack an old hock bottle with the bottom cut off, and, lying on the ground to deaden the sound, produced with this trumpet a close imitation of the raucous, impatient challenge of a stag. But even the most provocative call failed to elicit a response.

This part of the forest was quite untouched by the axe. It is not so everywhere. Some valleys, more accessible than this, have been exploited. When such an area is attacked it is cleared completely, nothing being left but a few dead or valueless stems. Such a tract produces a luxuriant growth of wild raspberry and other plants, and is therefore attractive to deer. To send the timber on its long voyage to navigable waters the following method is adopted:—A heavy dam, called a *Klause*, about forty feet high at its deepest, and of a proportional width, is constructed of a framework of timber, weighted with large stones, across the valley at its narrowest part. This forms an artificial lake which can be emptied at will by large sluices. In or below it the logs are collected, being dragged over the winter snow, or sent thundering

down the timber shoot by their own weight. At a favourable moment the sluices are opened, and a spate is produced, which carries them hurtling along the upper waters of the Pruth and the Dniester.

As the method of hunting in these forests is new to most English sportsmen, let me now explain the plan of campaign. It is obvious that to cover so extensive a forest it is impossible for four or five guns to hunt from one centre. There are two *Jagdhäuse*, about twenty miles apart, but it is not from these that the sportsmen hunt. At various points, in the depth of the covert, at distances varying from two to six hours from the lodge, log huts, called *Kolibas*, have been constructed for their accommodation. There are about thirty of them altogether, to enable all parts to be reached. To each guest is assigned a beat, accurately defined, but wide enough for all his requirements. On no account must he pass the boundaries lest he should spoil his neighbour's sport.

On the second morning after my arrival we were to start for our respective beats. In the courtyard about thirty native followers were paraded. These peasants showed great variety of type. If the map of the Continent is examined, it will be seen that, just here, invading hosts from Asia, attracted by the fat plains of Hungary and Poland, must have passed westward, and hosts in retreat eastward. The very name of the place indicates that it was the pass of the Tartars. Here then were Tartars and squat, flat-faced Mongolians, as well as tall, hatchet-visaged Magyars. They all wear the same distinctive garment—a sleeveless jacket of skin, with the fur turned inwards, and the outside richly embroidered, together with a



A KOIUBA.

leathern belt of portentous solidity and width. Their hair hangs down their shoulders in long matted locks, unless here and there a military bearing and cropped head denote that such a one has lately returned from doing his time as a soldier. Then there are the Jews, distinct in their dress and in all else. They did *not* come with us. They never seem to leave the houses, or to work. Yet they must do something, for they absorb whatever is worth having. Yes! They have one characteristic in common with the rest. They do not wash. Abdullah, a Somali servant fresh from East Africa, was surprised at this. He had never seen a people who did not remove their clothes. He remarked, "These people savages, like the Masai." Yet it was a superficial judgment, for they are a kindly race. I may here mention that the astonishment was mutual. Abdullah, among his other accomplishments, had been taught by his master to ride the bicycle, and went daily for the post. Now these people had never seen a black man or a bicycle. They had a notion that the combination was a new animal which had been fetched from foreign parts, and fled precipitately into the forest at the first encounter.

In this country there is no one between the prince and the peasant. Consequently there is a subservience of manner which is almost crushing to a Westerner. It is difficult to know how to behave to a man who bows so low and kisses your hand with such fervour. Yet their lord knows them all personally, and addresses them like his children. To each he gives the most precise instructions. "Thou, Ivan, sayest that three stags are crying in Blazow; may be the old twenty-ender that the Graaf

saw last year is among them. Thou wilt accompany the Englishman to the Koliba of Bukowinka. Go out in the night and bring him a report of those thou canst hear an hour before daylight. There is little feed there for thy horses. Thou wilt buy two trusses of hay in the valley and take them. At middle week thou wilt bring him to the house at Zielonicza, where I shall be." Such instructions are repeated to each, and enforced, until he knows the ropes. As I could not be expected to understand either the Polish or Ruthenian language, the German head forester was considerably allotted to me. I could not have wished for a better guide and counsellor.

At last the lessons were learnt, the luggage ponies loaded, and we rode together up the valley, along green alps, and past potato patches, with here and there a scattered farm, or small church, which appears to be circular, but is really in the form of a blunted Greek cross. At the end of two hours we separated with many a "Weidemannsheil." In another hour of steep ascent I had reached my quarters—a solid, one-roomed hut in the depth of the forest. The furniture is sufficient, but not too gorgeous. It consists of table, bench, and bed-shelves, fixed to the ground by stakes. The shelves are bedded down with six inches of pine shoots, than which there is no better mattress, and the earthen floor is carpeted with the same, so that the air is fragrant with the aroma of pine. The only drawbacks to it are the innumerable spiders which hide in it. There is no provision for a fire inside, and this is by design, lest the casual woodman should take shelter here and leave the place less solitary than he found it.

The men's hut adjoining is open to all. A log fire



SOME OF OUR FOLLOWERS

burns in the centre of the floor, and the occupants sit or doze, with their toes towards the blaze, while the smoke escapes through the ridge, which is left open from end to end. Some woodmen's *gites* are simply pent-houses, and, if well constructed and covered with sheets of bark, are an excellent protection against the weather. To each hunter is allotted a band of six or eight natives. Some of them look after the ponies, others constitute what is called "the dinner express." The latter leave the hut in the small hours of the morning for the nearest *Jagdhaus*. When the hungry hunter returns to his snug retreat he observes a neat row of tins, whence proceed varied and seductive odours, and his repast is set on the table as soon as these have been heated in the ashes of the great log fire which burns outside his door. But it is only when he is so fortunate as to slay the monarch of these woods that he realises the utility of this somewhat large following. The spoils of the chase, weighing from thirty to forty stone, must then be carried down, piecemeal, on men's backs, to some point whence they can be packed out on horseback.

Winter, the forester, who was eager for my success, now confided to me that Bukowinka was the best beat in the whole forest. I was all ready to prove it, but nothing was likely to speak till near 4 o'clock. Some time before that we had reached the edge of a *Wiese*, or small grassy alp, surrounded by timber, such as occur frequently on the highest ridges, and sat down to listen. The lowing of cattle at no great distance, the voices of herdsmen and the barking of dogs, were heard very distinctly. I thought that their presence must silence any stag, if not drive him away, but Winter assured me that the deer do not mind

the cattle, which improve the grass by pasturing it. Sheep and goats, on the other hand, are abhorrent to deer, and everything is done to withdraw them from the best beats.

Then at last came the challenge for which we waited, a prolonged "yaw-w-w," followed by a succession of impatient grunts, distinctive of a *Brunfthirsch* in his most combative mood. It is difficult to locate the sound when you are looking over a sea of tree tops, and the rolling echo from their stems is often strangely deceptive as to its direction. We started at once at our best pace, and when the stag spoke again, twenty minutes later, he was apparently but little below us in a deep hollow. We plunged down the hill, under or over the prostrate stems, getting as near as we dared, then waited for a further indication. Ivan now tried calling—a large shell was the instrument this time—and the imitation was decidedly inferior to that produced through the hock bottle. There was no response. Perhaps the note was too palpably false, and the stag got suspicious. I think this is very often the case, particularly with old and heavy stags. They will sometimes respond, but they generally lie low, and, if my experience is worth anything, these old hands never come to the call. We sat on a log listening till it got dark. Once I thought I heard a stick break, and perhaps I ought then to have attempted to get nearer, but I was deterred by the impenetrable wood-yard in front of me. In this form of sport one should take as a maxim, "Nothing venture, nothing have." Then we lighted our lantern, and returned in pouring rain.

My faithful forester slept in the hut with me—a really terrible snorer. My night was partly spent in throwing boots about, but I had borrowed felt boots from my host,

and felt is not an effective weapon. Our point the next morning was a wide valley where there had been a great clearance of trees. To reach it we followed upwards an old timber shoot, now ruined. The head of this valley forms a wide amphitheatre called Blazow. It looks easy to traverse, but is not so. The raspberry plants are, in many places, higher than my head, and, everywhere, hide the rotting sticks and stems. At the end of the day my knickerbockers and stockings were "snagged" to pieces by these hidden stumbling-blocks. It is a favourite haunt, and I listened to such an orchestra of tenor and bass as I had never heard before. Three stags, at least, were roaring themselves hoarse, and as there was nothing to impede the sound their voices rolled up the valley, echoing against its banks. To judge the size of a stag by his voice is a most important art, in which I relied chiefly on the experience of my native companion. Old stags, except at the beginning of the season, ordinarily emit only brief grunts of satisfaction, more like the language of a pig over his trough than of a nobler animal. The noise which a *Beihirsch* makes is quite out of proportion to his importance. It is louder, more frequent, and full of self-assertion. Such a stag I now perceived, feeding about four hundred yards off, with two or three hinds, but he was not worth stalking. The master stag was apparently stationed on the top of the ridge, but he became silent about seven o'clock, and under these circumstances ordinary mortals should wait for his majesty to speak again. We took refuge in a deserted wood-cutter's hut, and lay there for several hours. The Americans call this "sitting on a log." Doubtless the exercise of unlimited patience is wholesome, and generally

pays the hunter in the long run, but this virtue is not given to everybody, and, mindful of my last night's experience, we climbed at length to the top of the ridge, hoping to come to closer quarters before the afternoon concert began, with the result that we jumped two hinds, and found the empty royal bed. It was not till three o'clock that I both heard and saw another stag on the edge of the timber. I had to make a wide circuit—an obstacle race against time and daylight—but when I reached the place he was gone, and no longer signalled his whereabouts. As we tramped home along the slippery tracks, lighted by the glimmer of the swinging lantern, stags were bellowing in several directions. One, who must have been quite close to us, was apparently excited by our light. So insolent in tone was he that I almost expected him to come charging through the bushes.

I calculated that I had now had three days' "timber crawling." Those tremors of the nerves which constitute sport had vibrated through my body on several occasions, but the result was so far nil. I could count on only seven or eight more clear days of hunting. The difficulties were great and seemed heavily against the hunter. I have generally found that perseverance will sooner or later bring the happy chance, and so it proved in this case.

Imagine a lovely frosty morning, well calculated to start a good chorus. It may be taken as a rule that clear, cold weather has this effect, while southerly wind and moist, warm weather silence the deer. Half an hour from the hut two lusty voices proclaimed good-sized stags in front of us. Proceeding a few hundred yards, I was able to locate the sound on the ridge of Tchoracleva, upon



IN THE GLOOM OF THE FOREST.

which we were—wooded, of course, nearly every yard of it, and the whole ground covered with the usual *débris* and tangle. Having now acquired some confidence in my own power to find or force a way through such impediments, I proceeded by myself; but the way was better than usual, and I was able to advance without breaking sticks or making other mistakes. I remember nearly treading on a beautiful pine marten, and I flattered myself that, if I could surprise so alert an animal, I must be learning the trick of it. One of the stags was roaring grandly, and, at length, I was sure he lay on the top of a rise in the ridge which I could just see a hundred yards ahead. There was a hollow between us, rather more free from trees than usual. Feeling every step, I moved on to the bottom of it and stood. A slight current of air made me anxious, as I watched my breath floating dangerously in front of me, and I was just feeling in my pocket for my pipe, thinking to make more sure of its direction, when up jumped a great gray stag from his couch in the raspberry bushes, about fifty yards from me. I think he had either had the wind or seen me. He stood a moment with his head and shoulders concealed by a three-foot trunk. Then he moved forward at a walk, and I had a bullet into his shoulder. There was a crash of broken wood, and when the smoke cleared, which seemed an age, he was struggling on the ground. I thought he was done for, and neglected to reload quickly, but he struggled on to his feet and made off. Before I was ready he got among thick tree stems, and I could only fire a random shot, with what result it was impossible to tell at the moment. When the men came up we followed the blood track for a short distance,

but I determined to give him time. Some think this savours of cruelty, but it is in reality the surest, and therefore the most merciful, way. When, after a long delay, which I endured with considerable impatience, we took up the track, I led, sometimes climbing over massive trunks, then again creeping on hands and knees, where one would think such a heavy body could scarcely pass. He had had strength to jump a recumbent stem four feet high—a bad sign. On the other hand, Ivan now pointed out, from the blood drops on the leaves, that he was wounded on *both* sides. In about two hundred yards I became conscious of a strong smell of stag, and there lay the great beast, quite dead and stiff. Both shots had struck him, and he must have died within a minute or two of receiving them. I ran forward and counted his points—seven on one horn and five on the other—a noble head, according to my thinking, but far from being of the first class of those produced in this country. While Ivan bathed my hand with kisses, Winter cut out the tushes from the upper jaw, and presented them to me on his cap, along with a sprig of spruce, which I was expected to wear, in token of victory—a picturesque ceremonial which has been handed down for several centuries.

Returning to the hut, we sent out the whole of my following to perform the necessary offices, and bring the meat in, which is then separately weighed, and amounted, if my arithmetic is not at fault, to 29 stone. But there is, of course, much loss with this method of weighing. For the next thirty-six hours one of those mysterious silences ensued which baulk and disconcert the hunter. One or two faint grumbles were heard in the early hours, after



SOME RESULTS.

which not the most seductive calls could lure a response. The wind was in the south, the weather moist and warm ; we could only pray for the frost which stimulates the slow blood of the lord of the woods. The chance of encountering a stag by accident is very small. There was nothing to do but to wander aimlessly, looking for the tracks of bears, which were numerous hereabouts. One of my fellow-guests had seen and shot at a band of three a few days before, and the marauders had eaten many sheep. The next day dawned clear and cold, and therefore propitious, but I was due that night to keep the tryst at Zielonicza *Jagdhaus*, distant five or six hours. Fortunately the open valley of Blazow lay on our way. Here, to my great delight, two rivals were bellowing at one another. Right in front of me, a master stag, to judge by his voice—the same, as I believe, that had evaded me three days before—was growling surlily. I followed an old timber road, and the stalk was so easy that I am almost ashamed of it. But there was a curious circumstance connected with it. After the shot one of the hinds, which had been in the company of the stag, stopped on the rise at a short distance, and kept on “barking” at intervals. We were seeking for the track of the stag I had shot at, for I did not then know that he lay dead within twenty yards, when there was a loud crash of broken sticks close to us ; but, being in a hollow, we could not see what it was. While we were speculating on the cause, the second man, whom I had left on the timber road, came down to tell us that another great stag had come right across the valley, attracted by the hind. This was one proof among several that I had, that, in these unsophisticated regions the deer pay little attention to a gun-shot.

He had nearly walked over us in his eagerness to reach the hind. His escape did not distress me, for I was well content with my prize. This was a far finer beast than the first one, the antlers measuring 45 inches, with an inside width of 40 inches, and, when the separate portions were subsequently brought to scale, they topped 35 stone. Thus my early good fortune was not only maintained, but was on the ascending scale. I knew that this stag was at least worthy to be awarded a "good second class," but that night my host still encouraged me to hope for a better one.

I cannot expect the reader to follow me into the details of the damp, but delightful days of wandering which I spent at my next post—the valley of Dziurdziniec. This was a long and deep defile, with more precipitous sides than are generally found in the Carpathians, and it lay so out of the way that even my host had never visited it. Yet it was well tenanted. As the beat, which comprised another valley, was very extensive, there were four huts to cover it; but I did not shift my quarters, for the simple reason that no pony could go from one to the other.

My companion here was the ex-poacher Jaki. Jaki has considerable knowledge of his craft. He is very tall and lanky, and his movements reminded me of the gliding of a serpent. Though, no doubt, he had laid low many a fine beast in his unregenerate days, no stag had been "killed to him" on his own beat since he had become a *garde-chasse* and a respectable member of society. He was thus on his mettlé. Of spoken words we had none, but there was a perfect understanding between us. If, being in doubt, I looked back for suggestions, Jaki's anxious face was at my elbow. Unlike most of these



AS HE FELL.

peasants, he always knew his own mind, and was at no loss to express it with a sign. He had a blind and child-like belief in my unerring aim—an evidence of the confiding simplicity of his character—I in his woodcraft. As the rut was at its height, and several good stags were wandering to and fro, and crying in this wilderness, I was continually following up one or another of them. I frequently got very near without attaining success. Sometimes the pungent smell of the animal would smite me in the face, but, not being a dog, I failed to take the right turn. In such blind-man's buff the stag might probably get a whiff of an odour not less startling to him. It is surprising how silently these heavy creatures depart when they are suspicious. Once I heard a stag roll in his mud bath, and yet I could not get a sight of him. Often it was the mere restlessness of passion which impelled them to move off. Yet my good fortune continued, for I killed three more stags in three days. On each occasion Jaki covered my hand with kisses, and then going down on his knees kissed my legs, a piece of most delicate flattery, but a thing to make a modest man blush.

Here I must make a confession. I twice shot the wrong stag. The first mistake was in this wise. There was a grassy alp high up on the ridge, and I had shot a good stag of eleven points which had fallen dead in the opening; but before I could reach the spot to examine my prize, another took up his parable in a double bass which appeared to belong to a beast of large size. The voice proceeded from a steep timbered bank which faced me at a distance of less than two hundred yards. Thinking that the animal would probably come out into the opening, I

hastily concealed myself in a group of trees. For four hours I sat there listening to the exhortations of this patriarch. At the end of that time my patience was rewarded, or at least I thought so. I saw the dim figure of a stag emerging from the edge of the trees, exactly in the direction I expected, and at once jumped to the conclusion that this was the gentleman who had been preaching his sermon all the morning. As he passed for a moment behind a bunch of spruces I drew forward into the open, in a sitting position. The moment he reappeared he saw me, and up went his head with a jerk. I ought to have examined him more carefully, but, without waiting, rolled him over stone dead. It proved to be a small *Beihirsch* of eight points, a mere brocket, or baby, of 23 stone. Within five minutes of my firing the shot the real patriarch recommenced his advice to his family, in the same spot as before. This time I tried to beard him in his castle, but the contingency which I dreaded occurred. The wind, which was high and shifty, carried my taint to his nose when I had got within fifty yards of him.

Two mornings later I was hotly pursuing a beast who was evidently intent on provoking a contest with another of his species, whose voice I also heard in the distance. Every three or four minutes he spoke out vehemently, but I did not depend on ears alone. His track was easy to perceive along the green alley which he trod, and his powerful odour would have been sufficient to follow him by without any other indication. Thus three of my senses were on the alert, and I thought only of the stag in front of me. To cut a long story short, I slew that stag, who carried a head decidedly above the average.



A FALLEN GIANT.

Yet I thought, as we counted his points, that Jaki wore a pained expression. There were no explanations, of course, but, when Winter had arrived from the hut, I learnt the melancholy truth. Just before I had fired, Jaki had caught sight of "the biggest stag he had ever seen" on the opposite bank, and less than sixty yards from me, doubtless on his way to meet his rival. He said, "he had touched my elbow, but I paid no heed, and—he was afraid of the big English lord." I had not the smallest recollection of his touching me. In the old chivalrous days I should have suffered penalties for a like breach of the laws of venerie.

When we met again at the *Jagdhaus*, instead of the chaff which I expected and richly deserved, I received only encouragement. I might yet get a first-class stag; such a one was known to abide under the mountain called *Kukul*. The "Herzog" had tried for him for three days, and one of his men had seen the beast—a hoary monster with a fabulous number of points. The stags there were few because the forest is very dense, but those which are found in such a place are generally exceptionally good. It was distant, and the best stags had nearly given up roaring. Still there was a chance. Would I go?

There was no hesitation on my part. From my previous camp to the new one the journey occupied the best part of three days, allowing for a little casual hunting by the way, though the only thing we captured was a poacher who was taken fishing one of the pools of the Pruth, but released after a good frightening.

I reached my new quarters at Hawrylec Wielki by mid-day, and having had a five or six hours' walk, went into

the hut to rest. I had dozed off when one of the men came to the door to say that a stag was roaring. Coming out I could hear him distinctly far up the glen. It was only two o'clock, and a strange thing that a stag should be roaring so early. I set him down at once as an impatient youngster. After an hour's rapid walking I seemed to be getting distinctly near his trumpeting. By the sound, for he kept on speaking at frequent intervals, he appeared to be moving slowly on. Soon after this I found his slot, and it was clear that he was no *Beihirsch*, but a large heavy stag. Now there was a silent interval, and Nikola, my new attendant, tried to draw him with a call, which he made with his hands, but the feeble imitation produced no response, and we had to wait for half an hour. When at last the stag roared again the sound was startlingly near us. We now left the "Steige," and the going was thenceforth very rough. For the next hour and more it was a continuous struggle with fallen timber. Sometimes I thought I had reduced the distance between us to less than a hundred yards. Then serious obstacles were always interposed, and the delay would suffer him to gain upon us. The whole time we were climbing over, creeping under, or balancing along slippery, half-rotten stems, till my legs almost refused their office, and, when the muscles are tired, it is impossible to step with the lightness necessary to insure silence. In such a case, however, it does not do to be too tender about sticks. Something must be risked, and it even occasionally happens that a broken stick will bring a stag towards the intruder. At last we came to a heavy windfall through which we tried in vain to force a passage, but the stag



A WOODMAN'S SHELTER.

himself ultimately furnished the clue. We found his track and followed it. And now we arrived at a deep and narrow gully with a stream at the bottom. The stag was roaring about eighty yards off on the opposite slope, which was very steep. He was, of course, hidden from me by the usual curtain of foliage. To get down to the stream was easy; to climb, unperceived, the opposite bank was another matter. But it had to be attempted. I remembered that in my previous experience, though I had lost some chances by attempting too much, I had lost more by fearing to attempt anything. We managed the first fifty feet or so up the slippery bank, and then I came in sight of a small grove of young spruces, in which I was able to locate the origin of the sound, though I could see nothing. The next fifty feet were the critical part, especially as the stag now paused in his roaring, as though he had heard something. Nikola wanted to go straight up, but I thought this course hopelessly risky, and withdrew a few yards to where there was a slight hollow, descending the slope, which would partly deaden any noise we might make.

Leaving Nikola behind, I ascended this hollow, foot by foot, safely climbing all the obstacles which cumbered it, and again came in sight of the grove of young trees, which was now not more than thirty yards off, but there were here so many stems of large growing trees that I almost despaired of getting a clear view. As long as I stood still I knew that I was safe from detection. An erect figure among so many erect stems is not easily "picked up." The little tits and golden crests, playing within a yard of my head, were proof of that. There was one narrow vista between

two trunks, and I was debating whether to risk a further advance along it when the form of some animal appeared in it. It was in deep shadow, and for a moment I mistook it for a stag, and was disappointed at its small size. Then I saw it was a hind. She crossed to the left out of my sight. Another dainty damsel glided across my narrow stage. Then I felt sure the stag would follow, and made ready for him. Sure enough his great head came into sight, carried close to the ground, and gently tossed up and down. He was moving very deliberately, and it seemed an age before a forest of gleaming white points, laid well back on his withers, appeared—truly noble antlers. The space was not wide enough to see more than a portion of his body, and I fired as soon as the shoulder was visible. He crashed through the underwood and passed out of sight. Slipping in another cartridge, I pressed forward and caught sight of a massive body swaying about the stems of the young trees. Once more I fired, and I was so confident of success that I turned and waved my cap to my companion, but when I turned again the stag had disappeared. When Nikola came up he sought for blood, and, finding none, made a deprecatory motion with his hands, implying that the stag might be in the next parish. But he lay there within five yards, a most ancient and venerable beast. His mask grizzled with age, blind of one eye, his teeth worn down, and his body a bag of bones, he still carried a grand head of eighteen points, of which thirteen were on the “tops.” Under the circumstances I hope I may be excused if I “roar” somewhat on my own account. For the benefit of the initiated, then, I may mention that the tape shows



A VERITABLE PATRIARCH.

the length along the curve to be 52 inches, while the weight of the horns, with part of the skull, is 20 lbs. 8 ozs.—dimensions which are certainly not often surpassed. His weight, in pieces, was 36 stone, but he was much run down, and would undoubtedly have scaled much heavier at the beginning of the season. As is the custom, the antlers were compared with others in Vienna, and these were adjudged to be the best obtained this year in Austria or Poland. It may have been surpassed by one or two Hungarian heads with which it was not compared. A good authority afterwards put this stag's age at fifty years; but, however that may be, I had undoubtedly secured "a first-class head," and I had been doubly lucky in finding such a patriarch, still roaring lustily on the 3rd of October, and in reaching him just before it got too dark to shoot.

It was now five o'clock, and we had to leave the stag as he was, lest we should be overtaken by darkness before we had escaped from the chaos which lay behind us. As it was I found the back track in cold blood not less arduous than it had seemed with the passion of the chase upon me.

And now that I had crowned my previous good fortune I would not tempt the kindly dame further, but rejoined my friends, who had already abandoned the quest, and with them combined for a bear hunt, but that is not to be named in the same day with the regal pursuit which I have endeavoured to describe.

III

THE BACKBONE OF EGYPT

OF course, politically speaking, Egypt has no backbone—so they say—except such as is furnished by five thousand British bayonets. Physically that land is provided with a remarkable chain of granite vertebræ, lofty and jagged like any frost-bitten Alps. Few people trouble themselves about the existence of these peaks, for they are separated from the great highway of the Nile by a belt of waterless desert, and they are nowhere visible from it. They, however, daily serve as landmarks to the procession of great ships which ply between East and West, and many an Anglo-Indian must have watched the sun set in purple and gold behind their serried edges.

Years ago I found in Mr. Stanford's shop a maritime chart of the Gulf of Suez, on the margin of which is depicted the elevation of these mountains, as seen by navigators at a distance of fifty miles, and these inspiring outlines, the mystery of which is enhanced by the waterless solitude from which they spring, fed my strong desire to visit them. These jagged teeth do not form a continuous chain, but are separated from one another by intervals,

more or less wide, of elevated desert. I think they have never been accurately measured. They attain a probable height of 6000 feet, and I drew the conclusion that, being so near the sea, they must precipitate much moisture, and that animal and vegetable life must exist to some extent upon their flanks. Pursuing my investigations, I learnt that Wilkinson, Schweinfurth, Floyer, and at most one or two others, had visited these districts, which support an extremely sparse population of nomadic Bedawin, who own a few camels and sheep; that there are here and there natural reservoirs in the ravines where the storm waters are retained, and occasional shallow wells dug in the gravel where these ravines open on to the plain; that the Romans quarried certain precious marbles in these mountains, and that a wild goat—the *Capra Sinaiticus*, an ibex with long, well-knobbed horns, which curl backwards over his haunches—exists there. It was this latter fact which interested me the most. If the result proved that the district did not altogether fulfil my expectations as a hunting-ground, that was due rather to lack of time than want of foresight.

Arrived in Cairo in January 1893, with my two daughters, my purpose was to cross the belt of desert which intervenes between the Nile and the granite ranges; but first I desired to ascertain whether these goats were not to be found nearer to the Nile valley.

From the inscribed records of the tombs and monuments, it is obvious that these animals were familiar to the ancient inhabitants of the cultivated land. They are depicted, along with the oryx, antelopes, and gazelles, and appear to have been hunted by enclosing their passes

with nets. They were frequently brought as offerings to the gods, and there is reason to think that they were kept alive for this purpose in enclosed parks, as the captured kids are shown carried in baskets and fed by hand. Their bodies were mummied when they died, like other favoured animals. At least, there is one in the Ghizeh Museum, which was perhaps a royal pet. It is described as "a gazelle," but the leg and hoof which are exposed have the characteristic shape and marking of this ibex. I was not, therefore, surprised to hear that, at the present day, they occasionally appear on the high bluffs which, at certain points, overhang the Nile, and are even seen, though rarely, in the neighbourhood of Cairo, on such cliffs as those in which the quarries of Toura are situated.

It is strange that, of all the thousands of sportsmen who have followed the great historical waterway, bent on "washing their spears," so few seem to have been aware of the existence of this interesting game. That most inquisitive of travellers, Herodotus, does not include it in his list of the wild animals of Egypt, and, coming down to our own day, the only trained naturalist I know of, who has written of the fauna of the Nile, also omits it. Yet it must have frequently looked down on the decks of dahabiehs flying British colours, and counted its natural enemies. All wild goats and sheep, with well-judged confidence in their power of self-concealment, will thus, at times, approach the haunts of men. I have heard of only one successful hunt on these Nile terraces. An English engineer, while engaged in his irrigation duties, surprised and killed two within a few yards of the river.

Leaving Siout on the 4th of February, we pulled up

an hour after sunset right under Gebel Hareedee. This rock forms one of the most conspicuous cliffs on the Nile. In great part it is quite sheer, and rises perhaps a thousand feet above the river. As soon as we had fastened up to the bank we went ashore for a little stretch. We had not gone many yards before a native rose up out of the darkness. The Fellaheen always do appear like that from unexpected holes. He constituted himself our guide, and we strolled through the narrow grove of palms, not twenty yards wide, between the base of the cliff and the river. Then I drew a picture of an ibex and showed it to him by the light of the lantern, and asked if there were any *Bedan* about. The word *Taytal* is used for the old males. He pointed to the cliff and said there were. Whether true or not, this was the answer I expected. But I had got to the bottom of my Arabic, and returned to the boat for an interpreter. My next question was how long their horns were. He showed a full yard on his stick. It was quite clear that this could not mean gazelle, and other things indicated that ibex were meant, but whether their presence was frequent or only occasional remained doubtful.

The next morning we started early to climb the cliff while it was still in shadow. A fair track led up into a ravine hidden from below, where was the tomb of the Sheik El Hareedee, a holy recluse who once lived in one of the numerous rock excavations, and gave his name to the mountain. These rock-dwelling worthies were very numerous in the early centuries of our era. They felt towards other religions an intolerance, the like of which lingers in few places in these days, except in the slums of some Eastern cities, and a few cathedral towns. Un-

fortunately the images in many a stately temple carry marks of their pious zeal. We inherit the same instinct, but content ourselves with blackening the characters of our political opponents. What an advance we have made!

The cliff is honeycombed both with tombs and quarries. The latter are huge square galleries driven far into the rock, in which a battalion might shelter. At each angle commanding a new view we scanned every corner, and wherever sand or small *débris* had collected we sought for tracks, but for a long time without any result. At length I did find some sign, but it appeared to be very old and had been washed into a ravine. As rain is so rare here this was evidence that the animal we sought had not been there recently. The top of the cliff was flat. It was, in fact, the edge of the elevated limestone plateau which extends from Cairo to Keneh. There was not a scrap of vegetation, not so much as a lichen, to tempt any live animal, and whatever fourfooted beast shelters here must go down to the cultivation to feed. This would not make it attractive to wild goats, who, though they do most of their feeding early and late, require a bite in the middle of the day, and the cultivated land in the Nile valley is so flat that it would be difficult to them to accomplish this unobserved. Thus it would probably be vain to seek for them in such places unless they had been driven there by drought.

The view from the edge of the cliff was striking and suggestive. Far below was the sluggish current of the famous river, dotted with native boats like the wings of a tern at the point of lighting on the water. The green ribbon of cultivated ground spread widest, now on the



A NILE BLUFF.

right and now on the left of the river, and shaded away into gray haze far to the north and south of us. In the course of our search, which was continued for several hours, we saw two foxes, but no other live thing. Some large dog-like tracks may have been those of hyenas, and in various places we came across the bones of large animals which had been brought up here by birds or beasts of prey. Although I had seen enough to be sure that the goats occasionally visited the spot, the chance did not seem good enough for us to dwell on it. Following the river upwards, we tried in the same way Gebel Touhk and Gebel Tarif, smelling out a cold scent, but found no more evidence of the actual presence of the animal than at the first attempt. Even from English officers, long resident in the neighbourhood, I could get no certain evidence, and there was nothing for us left but to go eastwards to the higher mountains, which I hoped would prove a sure find.

From Keneh, where the Nile takes a considerable bend to the eastwards, there is a well-known caravan route to Kosseir, on the Red Sea. At one time the Indian mail was taken by this line, and if the railway which is talked of is realised, it doubtless would be so again. We proposed to start from the same point, but to keep much more to the northwards. Running down with the current from Thebes, we four—for my cousin G. had joined us—landed at Keneh on the 15th of February. Here our camel train had been got ready. The Mudir of the province, to whom we had letters, lives here. His leave was necessary before we could penetrate into those inhospitable regions. He asked us to dine with him, and told us that he has a hundred and fifty miles of Nile valley under his control,

nearly half a million of Fellaheen, and twenty thousand Bedawin. He said the latter are much the best behaved of his people, but as they are exempt from taxation, and seldom visit the *Rif*, or cultivated valley, this is not surprising. Some of them are partially giving up their nomadic habits, and settling on the borders of cultivation. There is some difficulty in determining at what stage an individual savage becomes a taxable citizen.

In the early morning our camels assembled on the river bank. We were startled to find that there were nearly thirty of them, but that was Mr. Cook's affair. The loading up was naturally a long business, but it is much easier to balance a heavy load on a camel's hump than on the round barrel of a packhorse. Besides which his skin is tougher; but he knows how to complain, and the chorus of groans and gurgles can be heard for miles on a still day. In spite of the barrenness of the country we were entering, it did not look as if we should starve. One camel was surmounted by four turkeys, another by a crate full of chickens and pigeons, and a third by two sheep. Indeed, we had to carry a month's supply of food of all kinds, and water for five days. Our black Soudanese cook, Moojan, had donned an enormous pith hat, which gave him the appearance of a mushroom with a black stalk. Every now and then a camel kicked. The action is a sweep sideways as far as a hind leg can reach. The effect is like that of a scythe, and the crowd of screaming Bedawin are mown down and scattered as grass. Baby camels gambolled about. An adult camel never sees a joke, but these woolly infants, with attenuated legs and heads like birds, are very lighthearted. The cameleers argued forcibly against the



WHERE THE DESERT MEETS THE RIVER.

overloading of their beasts, with some reason as it seemed to me. At last the loads were duly apportioned, and as each camel was packed he rose and joined the group forming upon the roadway. The riding camels were brought up and made to kneel.

To mount a camel for the first time is, for a *Howadji*, until he gets the hang of it, a complicated and anxious process. The first risk is that the animal will rise while the rider is climbing into the saddle. This he will inevitably do if the attendant has forgotten to place his foot on the camel's knee. The novice having settled on the saddle, which is like a flat wooden tea-tray on the top of the hump, and taken a tight grip of the "horns," of which there is one in front and one behind,¹ waits in suspense, wondering which end of the animal means to get up first. The action, when it does begin, is a violent see-saw in three jerks, which impel him alternately in the direction of the head and tail, until, if he is lucky, he finds himself ten feet from the ground. The fifteenth-century pilgrim, Felix Fabri, so exactly expresses my sentiments about camels, that I will quote his remarks. He says :—

A camel has a small head and is without horns. It has big and terrible eyes, and always seems a sorrowful and troubled animal. Its eyes are like fire-beacons, and big reflections shine in them ; for whatever a camel looks at seems great and huge to it, wherefore it seems to view everything with wonder and alarm. When, therefore, a man goes up to it, the beast begins to tremble, so that the man perceives that the beast trembles because the man coming towards it seems to it to be four times bigger than he really is.

Had not God ordered it, this animal would not be as tame and

¹ As Fabri says, "the animal has no horns." The term applies to the upright struts of the saddle.

disciplined as it is. When it screams, being in trouble, it opens its mouth, shakes its head, and raises up its long neck, wagging it to and fro, so that a man who is not accustomed to it is disturbed and frightened.

Passing through the narrow streets of the town, with its numerous gooleh factories, we quickly left behind the cultivated area, and found ourselves on the desert. A few encampments of Bedawin were the last dwellings we saw, and there was nothing but a boundless stony flat in front of us. Quite on the outskirts, on a low rise, we saw what we mistook for a small flock of turkeys, but which proved to be seven or eight enormous vultures, gorged with some attractive morsel. They let us come within forty yards, then, with three or four preliminary hops, took flight.

A short distance from the last palm-trees we began to be amused by unmistakable mirages in two or three directions. The thin stratum of vapour, shuddering in the heat, which affords a reflecting surface, is, I think, more frequent within reach of the dampness of the Nile than farther into the desert. Sometimes the phantom water seemed to wash the base of the distant hills and accurately reflected each light and shadow. Elsewhere it looked like a still shallow lake in the middle of the plain, while here and there its smooth surface appeared to be touched by a soft breeze. Slight inequalities in the surface of the desert gave the appearance of bays, islands, and promontories, while low-growing plants simulated the vegetation appropriate to the margin of water. When examined through a field-glass, the illusion, instead of dissolving itself into hard fact, was still more emphasised.

Our way lay up the broad Wady Keneh, flanked on the

right by low hills, and on the left, at several miles' distance, by a terraced limestone cliff which rose to a thousand feet. The gravel composing the floor of the valley was made up of fragments of a variety of granites and porphyries, washed down by the occasional floods from the mountains whither we were bound. Though the watercourse may be dry for many years in succession, such is the weight of water precipitated now and again on the high peaks, that a tremendous torrent is poured across a hundred miles of desert into the Nile. Here was clear demonstration of its volume and power. Near our first camp was a series of mounds, twelve or fourteen feet high, formed apparently by tamarisk bushes, round the roots of which soil had in the course of ages accumulated. These mounds had been worn and undermined by the last flood to a height of five or six feet, and the stream at this point must have been two or three miles broad.

Our course was indicated by the old camel tracks—twenty or thirty in number—close together and in parallel lines. The flat pads of their feet have smoothed and consolidated the stones and sand to a surface like that of a well-rolled gravel path, and walking was an exhilarating exercise. As the camels do not make more than three miles an hour, I found that I could keep ahead of them with ease. Personally I never got hardened to their swinging gait, and I covered about half the distance on foot. The ladies, on the other hand, quickly accommodated themselves to the conditions, and though I had provided a donkey as a change, the camels were generally preferred, partly, perhaps, because from the elevation of their backs the glare was less. In the long marches I often speculated

on the origin of the animal. There are no wild types to afford a clue.¹ We know him only as the servant of man. Like the palm-tree, without man the race would, it is said, disappear in a single generation. The camel of Egypt is incapable of climbing even a very small obstacle, and would seem to be unadapted to any but a flat, sandy country. Yet the earliest dynasties do not appear to have known him. It is impossible to believe that his peculiar qualities have been developed in five thousand years.

On this, our first day, we made a short march and camped early under a low rocky bluff. Though apparently travelling on a dead level, we found that we had already risen three hundred feet. To those who are new to it the first camp in the desert is a delightful experience. As soon as their loads are unhitched the camels wander off dreamily to browse on the scanty desert plants, which are devoured by them as if they were most delicate herbage. The greater part of the desert is bare of vegetation, even of this flinty quality, but camps are never pitched except where there is some growth for the camels. Ours had a feed of beans in addition.

Moojan, who had been literally lolling on his camel all the way, the picture of idle content, was galvanised into activity. His shining black legs twinkled with energy as he prized open wooden cases, or blew up his charcoal fire. All hands were quickly at work pitching the tents, and the rocks behind us echoed with the blows of the mallets on the tent-pegs. In ten minutes our little village of

¹ The so-called wild camels of Central Asia are scarcely to be distinguished, in any particular, from the tame ones in the hands of neighbouring tribes, and are doubtless descended from tame animals.

canvas was complete. It was more extensive than I thought necessary. In fact, our whole equipage was too gorgeous according to my ideas. It is true we were placed on short allowance of water for washing, but it is surprising how much swabbing can be accomplished with half a pint of the precious liquid. The worst of it is that, in this thirsty air, the end first operated upon dries up before the other extremity is finished.

The donkey rolled himself in the sand. At first he seemed to wonder there were not more donkeys about, and would now and then yell out an inquiring bray, but after the second day he gave that up. He was an excellent traveller; but it seemed hard on the camels to have to carry water for him when they got none themselves. The heat had been great and our turkeys had suffered the most. Like their betters, the poor things had a difficulty in keeping their balance, and had been travelling most of the way with heads downwards. They were consequently at the last gasp. The baby camel was still the freshest of the party. He walked about among the loads, and after examining and nibbling each one would turn round and kick it, all with the air of a custom-house officer. Now and then he would take to playing practical jokes on the donkey, or pretend to get his legs entangled in the neck of some recumbent member of his own species. If seized by the tail he uttered a human squeak, which quickly brought his mother around. He was not so difficult to catch as Timsah ("the crocodile"), a rough, long-legged dog belonging to the Bedawin, half greyhound half pariah. Nothing would induce this creature to come to one's hand, though he greedily devoured whatever was thrown to him.

The only approach to amity he ever made was when, in the heat of the day, he would try and walk in the shadow of my camel.

But the most interesting animals in our following were the Bedawin cameleers. These were of the Maazeh tribe, and have probably changed as little in the last five or six millenniums as any people on the face of the earth, owing mainly to the inhospitable nature of their country, which has tempted few invaders. It was a pleasure to watch their spare and active figures as they led their animals, without a murmur, in the hottest hours, or clambered to the top of the load, swarming up by the neck. They were always good-tempered except at loading-up time. Any little service—particularly to the “sitt,” whom they regarded with special veneration—was performed with a childish grin of pleasure. If any of us left the camp he was always followed by one of these willing protectors—an attention which we considered superfluous. The word “backsheesh” was not in their vocabulary, and their independent air contrasted well with the demeanour of the Fellaheen, who always remind me of a dog which has been overmuch beaten. I may here mention a little incident which happened a few days later, and which fairly illustrates the faithfulness of their service to us. I had taken my daughters with me on a hunting expedition, and having reached the watershed by mid-day, allowed them to return by themselves along a ravine, which I knew would conduct them in two hours to the neighbourhood of the camp. My Bedawin attendant did not seem happy about this arrangement, and perching on a pinnacle of rock, declined to move for over an hour, and until he had seen

them pass a certain bend in the ravine visible from this point. Nor was he content till, on our return in the evening, he had made a *détour* to satisfy himself by the footsteps in the sand that they had safely emerged from the mountain.

The Bedawin are generally of the hatchet-faced breed, and their eyes have that intent and steady look which men have who are watching for something at a distance. Their whole wealth is in their camels, which they breed in the desert and trade in the "Rif." When their camels had been attended to, they sat in groups round the fire of dry brush or camel's dung, in the hot ashes of which they baked their flat cake of doura. The camels, having fed, were brought up, and made to kneel in a circle, the head of one against the tail of the next, as a sort of rampart or wind-break round each little camp.

The early morning is the cream of the day in the desert, but it is often painfully cold, for at the elevation that we reached there was a difference of 50° or 60° Fahrenheit between the day and the night temperature. The expanse of the desert acquires a delicate dove colour, and the distant hills grow pink by the reflected light which precedes the dawn. The ante-glow spreads a brilliant orange in the East about three-quarters of an hour before the sunrise, but dies out, and gives way to a clear green and saffron before the final glory. While we take our breakfast the tents are rapidly laid prostrate and packed. The camp is noisy on these occasions, not to say wrathful, so we generally left the confusion behind and walked on for two hours.

The silence of the desert is absolute and almost startling.

It is an experience to be felt nowhere else. Here is a little sample such as the world was before the pulse of life began. There is no sound of water, no rustle of leaves, no hum of insects; even the thud of the soft pads of the camels can scarcely be called a noise. It is to visit a dead planet. The only exceptions to this rule of lifelessness which we observed were a sand-coloured lizard and some spiders; but desert creatures assimilate so closely to their surroundings that we may have passed many other kinds unnoticed. Such small deer, no doubt, derive sufficient moisture from the nightly dews.

About mid-day we halted for luncheon in the shade of a rock, if obtainable, or inside some ancient tank half full of sand. While so engaged the baggage train, which we had left far behind, would pass us, and we so timed our halt as to overtake them about camping-time. Shortly before this our head cameleer, Ghanim, who was a bit of a dandy in his way, and rode a tall white *Hageen*, as the thoroughbred swift camels are called, would shoot ahead, at ten miles an hour, to overtake the caravan, floundering and flopping on the top of the animal's hump, and his pure white abayeh, floating behind, would be quickly reduced to a speck in the distance.

In a few days our camps assumed a homely air. The poultry, released from durance, would strut and crow and search for impossible insects, as if each rock was their native dunheap. The turkeys, too, soon got their sea-legs. The principal one—that is he who, being the toughest, thought he had the best chance of surviving to the end—would stretch his neck and gobble on the back of his camel, as if he was in command of the



CAMP AT MEDISA.

expedition. Even the sheep, driven by the inhospitality of Nature to an unnatural affection for man, walked round our dinner table begging for scraps, and sometimes, when nobody was looking, would enter my tent and recline on the mattress, just like any pasha. They would have learnt many things before they got back to Kenah if they had not all been eaten first.

The second night we halted at Kasr el Jin—"the Castle of the Spirit"—the first of a series of *hydreumata*, established for the maintenance of the supply of water on the route to the quarries. These wells and tanks are one and all in ruins, or filled with sand. They were fortified posts, not, I imagine, for protection against the aborigines, who must always have been a feeble folk, but to prevent the escape of the slaves or convicts who worked the quarries. It is clear that no man could, unassisted, cross the desert without access to these wells.

From the top of the little hill on which the fort of sun-dried bricks stands we had our first view of the distant mountains for which we were bound, rising above the foot-hills in four or five separate groups of peaks, of striking outline. This sight sent us happy to bed. The third night we camped at the entrance to the foot-hills, and the next morning followed tortuous wadies with flat sandy bottoms four or five hundred yards wide, and low granite hills on either side. Now we found the first beginning of life, due to the moisture in the gravel beneath our feet—thistly shrubs and low-growing plants with a strong smell of lavender. Here and there were trailing patches of the desert melon, with its green and yellow fruit, beautiful to look at, but most acrid to the taste. Those plants

which the camels ate most greedily appeared as dead and parched as old brooms. They swayed their snaky heads about and snatched mouthfuls as they stalked along, till it seemed to the rider that they must tread on their own necks. Under many of the shrubs were the burrows of the jerboa—a desert rat with long hind legs, like a miniature kangaroo. Insects became frequent, and the small birds that prey upon them, and the hawks that prey on the birds. Henceforth, at every camp, four or five small white vultures watched operations from the neighbouring rocks. All this life served to show that we were approaching water. There were tracks of gazelle which Timsah winded, and he kept ahead of us. At last he found two and had a fine course in view. But they quickly distanced him. We also saw a larger track which our followers said was that of a *Taytal*, but it was in loose sand and not distinct.

At last we approached the base of the higher mountains where I knew was a watering-place. I asked where it was, and our Arabs pointed at what appeared to be an unbroken cliff. After the camp was pitched we went to explore. The cliff was about a mile off. Here we found a deep, narrow ravine choked with blocks of granite. A rough and difficult path led up to it. At last we came to a small and very foul pool of water, under a rock; but the Bedawi pointed higher. Presently we found another pool, but still he beckoned us on. A large, smooth ridge of granite barred the ravine from side to side, and, surmounting this, we found a splendid pool thirty yards long, with green depths. No wonder that the camels, even with a four days' thirst upon them, had to wait till



THE POOL AT MEDISA.

they were fresh before they could attempt such a scramble. But the men brought down some skins full. Refreshing and beautiful by contrast with their arid surroundings as these pools are, I was not extremely confident of their wholesome quality, and henceforth required that all drinking water should be boiled and filtered before use. Such drinking-places have been the resort of countless animals, wild and tame, for ages, and the surrounding gravel is necessarily foul, except after a "freshet."

We were camped in the broad, flat valley of Mediseh, at the southern end of the Kittar Mountains—the largest *massif* hereabouts, the cliffs of which rise abruptly from the level sand. They are high enough to be covered, not unfrequently in winter, by an evanescent mantle of snow. A variety of desert plants indicated more moisture below, but the acacia and tamarisk-trees, which used to be so conspicuous a feature of these wadies, have to some extent disappeared. Blackened pits show where the Bedawin have converted them into charcoal. The food in these valleys is at best exceedingly scanty, and if these granite mountains were to sink again into the hot bosom of the earth, whence they came, the world would not be appreciably poorer.

I had a fancy that the *Bedan* fed in these wider valleys, and the next morning commenced my hunting by following one of them for a long distance, examining the level surface for traces, which are visible in such places, though not on the rocks, but was rewarded by only one doubtful track. This is the best method, where it is practicable, of determining the plentifulness or scarcity of game. Careful spying also failed to reveal any sign of the

animal on the neighbouring fastnesses. Returning across the cliffs, I found several ibex couches, which the animal had scraped among the stones or on ledges. But the surface seemed to have been beaten by rain since they were used, from which I inferred that they were old, and I saw no other sign recent enough to raise hopes.

Coming down I found among the rocks a single horn, which I recognised as having belonged to a Barbary or maned wild sheep, the *Aroui* of the Atlas Mountains. The Bedawin knew nothing of the existence of this animal at the present time, but in such a conservative climate it might have lain there unaltered for centuries. It was quite perfect, except that the exposed part was worn by drifting sand.

In the evening I learnt that there was a small camp of *Maazeh* Arabs half a mile distant, and that they had several dogs which were used in hunting, and this would be quite enough to account for the absence of ibex in that range, as nothing terrifies wild animals so much as being chased by dogs. The Bedawin method of hunting is to seek for the animals when on the feed. The dog then pursues them by sight or scent, and the goats take refuge on some ledge or cliff which the dog cannot climb, till the hunter, guided by the barking, approaches at his leisure to such close quarters that even his antiquated matchlock can scarcely fail. I was not anxious to try this method, and on our arrival had ordered Timsah to be tied in camp.

For our second attempt I determined to penetrate as far as possible into the main chain, and, with that end in view, followed the ravine which opened opposite our tents. My daughters accompanied me, and one of our Bedawin



THE WILD FIG.

1. The first part of the document is a list of the names of the persons who were present at the meeting.

acted as guide—too large a party for hunting, but, from the first day's experience, I had little expectation of a successful stalk. At first we ascended rather steeply a rough ravine, till we reached two lovely pools at the foot of what would be a fine waterfall when the torrent is running. Most of the natural watering-places in this country are holes such as these in torrent beds. But their utility depends on the approach to them being practicable for camels. They must be deep reservoirs and sheltered by cliffs from the sun, or they would quickly dry up by evaporation. Gradually rising, we kept on up the ravine till it was closed in by fine broken peaks rising all round us to a height of five or six thousand feet. Granite mountains do not generally form *aiguilles*, which in limestone ranges shape like a bell-tent, *i.e.* steep at the top and curving off into the plain. These peaks, on the other hand, are steepest where they rise from the plain. They form parabolic curves, and their tops are dome-shaped. Scattered vegetation, consisting of coarse grasses, an occasional dwarf palm, and a kind of smooth-barked fig, lined the ravine, but not a trace of growth could be seen on the mountain sides.

The gorge was cumbered with huge rounded blocks which testified to the resistless force of the torrent at times. If the conditions are realised, the sudden and tremendous precipitation of water will be understood. Given a south-east wind, carrying vapour-laden air from the surface of the Red Sea, these mountains, rising so abruptly from the level, will cause the hot layer to bound upwards to a height of six thousand feet, and the sudden chill pulls the string of the shower-bath.

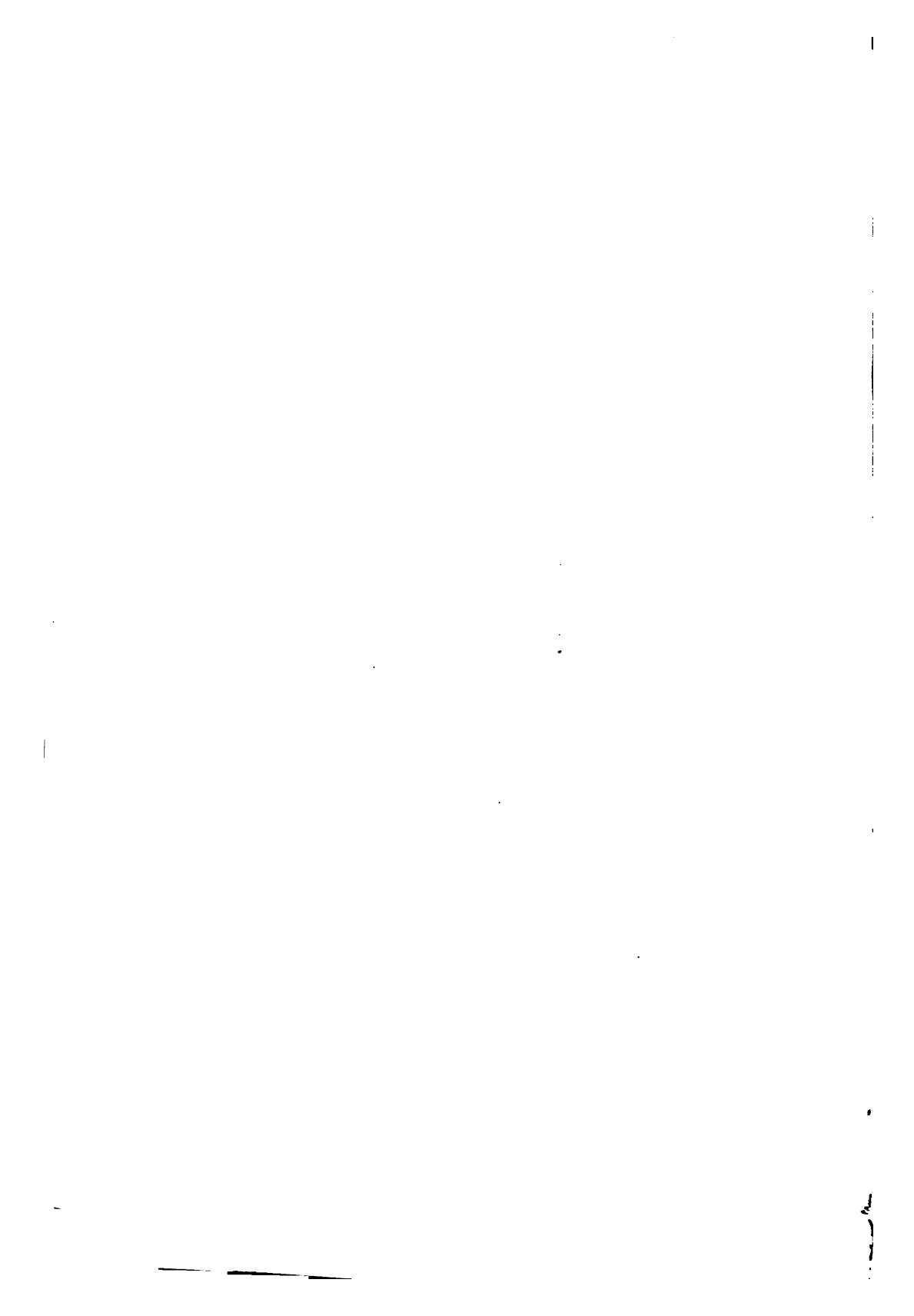
Here, again, we sought in vain for fresh tracks, and each sign of the kind which hunters seek for was very stale. We passed several smaller pools which had shrunk, leaving a space, five or six feet wide, of slime. Here was a sure test of the presence of game, because if any animals had visited them during the weeks which had elapsed since these pools stood full, they must have left impressions, as sharp as in plaster of Paris, in the smooth, damp surface. Finding none, we turned our attention to simple exploration.

We determined to try and get up one of the seductive peaks which surrounded us, hoping to see the sea and Sinai from the top. The rocks were very steep, but our rubber soles gave great clinging power. Salami, who accompanied us, was an active climber, but soon began to show signs of foot-soreness and discouragement. We were bothered by certain ravines invisible from below, but one after the other we turned or conquered them, until we had subdued most of the other peaks, and were within fifty feet of the top of this one. Then another gap with sheer sides cut right across the ridge we were upon, and at right angles to it. We tried it a long way down the mountain, so far down that, when we did get across, our poor Arab with his bare feet protested piteously, pointing at the sun. These people are as ignorant as it is possible to be, without books or priests, and almost without contact with others like themselves, but their imaginations are active, and people the air with *jins* and *afreets*. Thus Salami had a particular dread of being out after dark, and, yielding to his fears, we turned campward.

As G. had been no more fortunate, we moved the



SAND-WORK ROCKS



next day to Kittar, at the other end of these peaks. Here we found ourselves among rocks still more bizarre and fantastic. What are the agencies which grind these mountains to pieces? Water does its share, though its action is only intermittent. It has scooped extraordinary ravines near the Kittar camp. Frost can do nothing, as, though it is not infrequent in the winter, the rocks are dry. Appearances would justify the belief that lightning and earthquakes are responsible for much of the ruin. The great differences of temperature by day and by night, and the consequent expansion and contraction, have also told on the fibre of the rock. But here are signs not to be accounted for by any of these agencies—the hardest granite scooped and honeycombed and undermined as if by water, and yet not by water. These rounded hollows follow no determinate level of coast, nor any probable lines of falling water. There is another tool at work practically unknown in our climate. It is sand blown before the wind. The hardest rock cannot stand against the bombardment of these million tiny fragments. Just above camp was a huge rock whose base had been thus rasped away till it looked like a mere stalk or neck supporting a giant head. To come nearer home, the neck of the Sphynx and the base of the Step Pyramid are obvious examples of this erosive power.

More than once we had practical experience of the phenomenon of sand-storms. On the first occasion my tent was blown over upon me as I slept, and I was left crawling about under the flopping canvas, trying to find my shoes. When I had emerged I found this new kind of hailstorm rather trying to the exposed parts, and I

rather prided myself on my success in re-erecting my house, unaided. The other tents held, and their occupants did not know of my mishap, but every other upright thing was cast down, and a number of loose properties went off into the desert. They were all recovered except G.'s sponge, which, being light and elastic, hopped off miles beyond recovery, and by the next morning might have arrived in the Mahdi's country. The next visitation was in the daytime when we were on the march. I saw it coming in the distance, a wall of sand-cloud, sweeping towards us, though the atmosphere where we were was still. I stopped the caravan and began pitching camp immediately. But before the operation was complete we were struck by a storm of sand through which we could not see twenty yards. After half an hour of this a person feels like a fried sole covered with bread crumbs. We dare not open our luggage lest it should get filled with sand, and the wonder was how Moojan succeeded in cooking a tolerable dinner.

The Kittar camp was very beautiful. Our tents were pitched near the junction of two ravines. The southerly one led by steep and darksome ways to Floyer's waterfall—so called after the enterprising traveller, now at the head of the Telegraph Department in Egypt, who discovered it. This was a sheer wall, 80 feet high, covered with maidenhair fern. The side walls of the ravine were far higher, and one was led to speculate how long the torrent, which may on an average run during a few hours only in each year, has taken to cut back through a mile of solid granite to this waterfall. Above and below it were several lovely palm-fringed pools, and near some of them were

little stone huts where ibex-hunters are wont to lie in wait for the animals who come to drink. On an upright face of rock near the camp I found several grotesque representations of ibex, loaded camels, etc. I believe there are many similarly decorated rocks on the Sinaitic side of the Gulf.

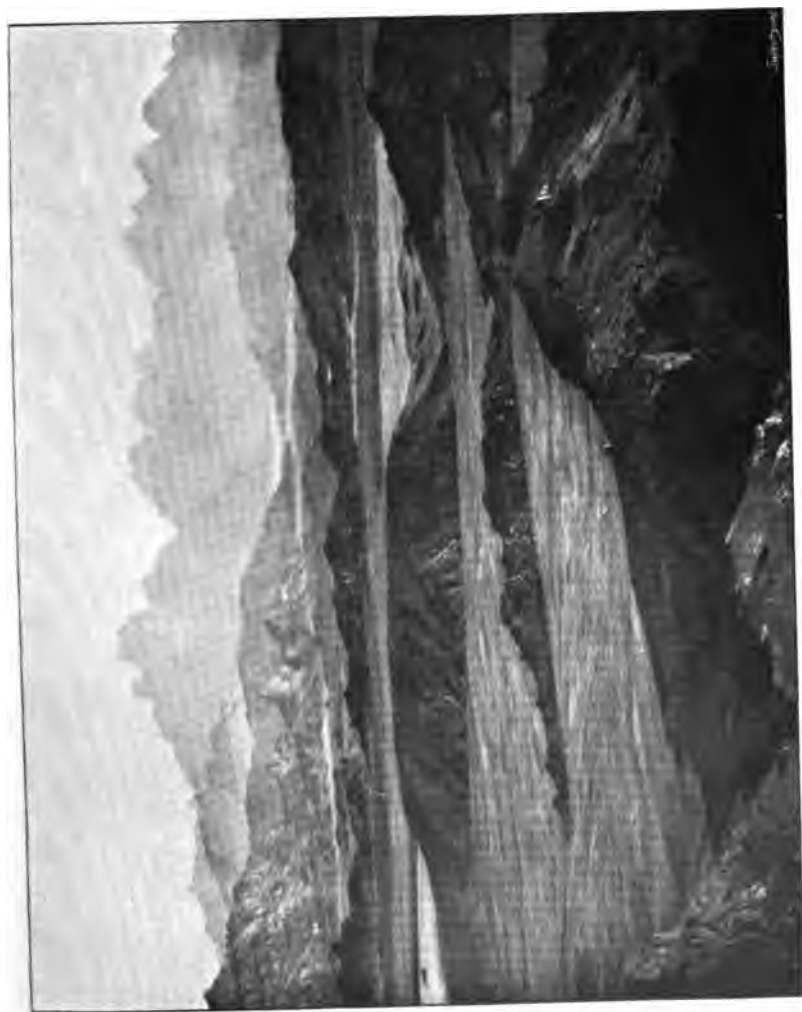
Here we were more hopeful of success, as, in the ravines, we found plants nibbled by the goats, and actually saw two of the animals, but they did not give a fair chance. An Arab produced from among the rocks the horns of a fine *Taytal* which he had shot not long before. But that only showed that this district also had been recently harried with dogs. Notwithstanding this, we worked away from morning to night, spying each rugged corrie with extreme care, and afterwards purposely giving it the wind, or showing ourselves conspicuously, in the hope of moving something. It was not easy ground to cover satisfactorily with the glass, owing to the number of hollows and embrasures scooped by sand or water; but if anything had moved, we must have heard if not seen it in the prevailing silence. Despairing at last of these vain quests, I again abandoned the hunting for a climb, determined to get my first view of the sea. It was hot work, but I was well repaid. My only fear was that other peaks would overtop the one I had selected, but as I neared the summit there was nothing but two toppling crags between me and the horizon. A few steps farther, and I saw, between them, the thin line of bluest blue of the Red Sea, and all the range of Sinai beyond, a view which suggested many thoughts.

Along and across this famous waterway the civilisation

of Egypt drew its earliest inspiration from the East. It landed at the little coral-locked harbour of Myos Hermos, which lay there almost in the foreground, though it was five thousand feet below me, and twenty miles away. Thence it crossed the thirsty belt, here at its narrowest, and in the fat Nile pastures it thrived amazingly, till some of its drift wood, floating down the benign river, stranded on barbarous shores, and struck and spread again. The plain lay pale in the quivering heat, and from it sprang, on either side of the Gulf, gaunt peaks like the sun-bleached ribs of some derelict monster half buried in the desert sand. Of what old-world histories had they not been witnesses, of which Moses and his unruly horde is the tale of yesterday!

Our next move was to Badia, an important well of the Romans at the base of Gebel Dukhan, the range in which their famous porphyry quarries, which it was our object to visit, were situated. Here the ground was strewn with fragments of amphoræ, and of the blue pottery which the Romans used; also with the remains of shellfish, the only fresh food which these poor exiles could obtain nearer than the Nile. Among the *débris* of what appeared to be a sort of garden, I picked up a pretty little bunch of crystals which it pleased me to think some Roman centurion had treasured for his child.

Gebel Dukhan is a mountain shaped like a horse-shoe laid on the ground, on the ridges of which are the porphyry quarries, and in the valley which they enclose are the ruins of the little Roman town and temple which sheltered the quarrymen. The stone was brought down this valley by a road which made a wide *détour* of the mountain, and



THE KITTAR RANGE FROM JEBEL DUKHAN.

then across the desert to the Nile by the route we had followed—a course of a hundred miles. The transit of the blocks was doubtless accomplished on wooden rollers. We did not care to follow the circuitous route, but, leaving the camp behind, and travelling with light equipment, crossed the ridge itself—a climb of two thousand feet—by an old Roman path which made a short cut from Badia. For a long distance it was carried across a fan-shaped talus of loose stones and rock, many miles in extent, washed down from a ravine. The ancient path in this part had been made by simply removing the stones and piling them on either side. The fact that it had remained in this condition suggested a curious observation. This talus must have been the work of a series of tremendous floods, but for two thousand years since the path was abandoned no flood on the same scale could have occurred, or it must have washed the stones, with which the surrounding surface was covered, on to the road.

When we reached the steep sides of the ravine we followed a series of zigzags, splendidly engineered, and always, whatever the obstacles, following exactly the same gradient, from which I assumed that it was used by beasts of burden. Descending into the valley on the other side, our Bedawin's dogs left us, following up the scent of something. Presently we heard them barking among some cliffs to our right. Taking out my glass, I made out an ibex climbing the cliff and another on the face of a rock, at the base of which the dogs were vehemently baying it. It was only a female, and G., who got up to it first, declined to shoot, but climbed two thousand feet higher in the vain hope of catching sight of the other, which was a

young male. When I approached the dogs, the goat had placed herself where it seemed impossible for anything but a fly to cling, and where she might have safely remained, as I had no desire to annex this poor little sad-coloured desert nanny. I tried to stalk near enough to kodak the group, but, getting a glimpse of me, she sprang down, and the dogs, after a short course of two hundred yards, caught her, strange to say, with very little injury to skin or bone. She was heavy in kid, or she would have quickly shown them her heels. Our Bedawi was close up, and in a trice had tied her legs, while I fastened a handkerchief over her eyes to prevent her struggling. The females of this species are much smaller than the rams, and we had no difficulty in carrying our prisoner down the valley to the spot where we proposed to camp. We proceeded to sit upon her fate. I should have liked to carry a live female of the species as an offering to the Zoological Society. On the other hand, the creature would have to spend ten days in a bag, on the back of a camel, an ordeal which might be attended with inconvenience to us, and certainly would be, under the circumstances, to the lady in question. Our Luxor attendant, who had not hitherto come out as a linguist, remarked: "Next week him make little boy." That settled the point. We elected to give her her liberty, but not without protests from the Arabs, the lawful prey of whose bow and spear she was, and who strongly objected to allowing good meat to run away. We waited till it was too dark for the dogs to follow her, and then released her. She skipped off into the darkness without sign of hurt.

This camp was an *al fresco* one under the lee of a



NOON-DAY HEAT.

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large *Yessar* bush. Free from the awe-inspiring presence of our dragoman, our ragged company of nomads did the honours gracefully, and initiated us into the mysteries of their *cuisine*. They would have liked to tell us many things, but we had no interpreter. Round an angle of rock we found a sand-strewn chamber for the ladies. Under the stars we lay wondering whether this death-like stillness would ever again be broken with the ring of hammer and chisel. Near us were the remains of a little Roman town and its temple and tank, shaken to pieces by earthquakes; at least I assumed that to be the cause of the ruins, as all motive for depredation of the usual kind seemed wanting. If the quarrymen lived here, they must have had a stiff daily climb of two or three thousand feet to their work. G. had stumbled on one quarry in the eastern wing of the mountain in the course of his solitary hunt of the night before. The principal quarry is in the western wing. It took us nearly three hours to reach it, not following the ancient and well-defined path, but a ridge which terminated near our camp. We followed this unusual course, hoping to make some fresh discovery; and on the ridge, at a great height, we came on some workmen's huts not before observed, and found a block of black diorite which they had used to sharpen their tools upon.

On all the mountain-side I saw no scrap of vegetation except one small fleshy-leaved plant, right in the quarry itself, but that was so full of sap that to pluck it was like washing the hands in cool water. The side of the mountain is scored by finely-executed zigzag paths, which the ibex, now the only inhabitants, had found very convenient for bedding-down places; and wide slides for lowering the

blocks of porphyry were carried straight down the mountain-side. This operation was effected by the aid of solid stone platforms which served as fulcra. The quarried faces showed the lines of wedge-holes by which the blocks were broken off. From the number of these in preparation I inferred that the quarries must have been abandoned suddenly.

This world-renowned rock consists of small white crystals embedded in a reddish paste. The perquisite of emperors, it was fetched at enormous cost of life and treasure for their own glorification and the decoration of heathen temples. It was this porphyry which originated the saying, "Born in the purple." A Byzantine empress lined a chamber with it for her accouchement, the material having been brought from Rome. Being thus rare and of matchless quality and everlasting hardness, it was always accounted precious; and when new religions supplanted the old, the temples were plundered for the churches and mosques. Even Westminster Abbey and Canterbury Cathedral have thus drawn some plaques of pavement from this small quarry, four thousand feet above the Red Sea. It is a curious fact that, with all their love of fine stones, the ancient inhabitants of Egypt do not appear to have discovered the porphyry.

As the Gulf of Suez was not more than twenty miles distant, it was difficult to understand why the stone was not removed that way; but it must be remembered that though, at a much earlier age, there was water communication from the head of the Gulf of Suez to the Nile, it had ceased to be available long before Roman times, and, on the other hand, the blocks, once barged at Koptos,



WORTH A GOOD SPY—WHATEVER!

on the Nile, would reach the coasts of Italy without change of bottom.

Under one of the quarry faces we sat, admiring the splendid view of the mountains of Sinai. Brother Felix Fabri ascended the loftiest of them, Gebel Katarin, four hundred and fifty years ago, and thus describes the reverse view of the range upon which we were, and what he was told of its inhabitants :—

Beyond the gulf of the sea toward the south, we saw, as we looked down toward the west, an exceeding high mountain, which they call Olympus of Æthiopia. At sunrise this mountain pours forth flames in a terrible fashion for five hours. From this mountain Æthiopia begins, which country was of old named Atlanta, and is bounded by the river Nile. It is a very wide land, and brings forth strange men and wondrous beasts in its wildernesses. Some of these men look upon the sun when he rises and sets with dreadful curses, and always angrily abuse the sun because of their sufferings from the heat. There satyrs run about, who are so like men that they are reckoned to be men indeed, though they are not so, and there be many wonders in that country.

His remark about the flaming mountain doubtless relates to the Porphyry Mountain. It would be about the most southerly peak visible to him, and is called Gebel Dukhan, or the "Mountain of Smoke." Is it not probable that both the name and the tradition of which the pilgrim speaks had their origin in the smoke made by the quarrymen, or the dust of their operations, many of whose huts were placed on the actual crest of the ridge, easily visible from Sinai, and over an immense area of country?

We had to leave our shelter before the sun had moderated, for to reach our main camp it was necessary to descend into the valley and recross the chain. Hence-

forth our caravan journeyed southward, but to the east of the main chain. We hoped to get some hunting on the Munfia Mountains, but we were not more successful than before. Gebel Sheyib is perhaps the finest peak of the range; and I was anxious to make acquaintance with it; but foot-hills, and a pass said to be impossible for loaded camels, drove us out towards the coast, and we had no time to come to close quarters with it. The wonderful sea sunrises were some compensation. We commonly left camp on foot by early twilight, and having proceeded for some distance, climbed some low hill to watch the marvelous display. The moon, just then at its full, set about the same time behind the jagged mountains to the westward. A faint twinkle of a distant lighthouse on one of the islands slowly paled before the growing light. To the eastward the foot-hills formed a sharply-cut pattern of purple against the horizon, but with wide gaps, which showed the sea, reflecting the radiance on its heaving surface.

Once and again on this side we encountered a few Arabs pasturing small herds of sheep. Some of them were of the Ababdeh tribe, quite a different race to our Maazeh, and much nearer to the negroid type. They come from farther south, and have, in fact, no right to be here; but for the moment their feuds are composed, and our people were friendly with them.

They live in tents made of mats of woven palm-leaves. The Maazeh use goat-hair cloth. They have only one fault, which comes of a desire to please. According to them the next place is always crowded with *Taytal*. From their language and demeanour you would think that



JIDDAMA RAVINE.

there would not be room enough for so many on the rocks.

We sought, and found, the Roman quarry of the famous "starling-winged" granite, and thence cruised southward along the watershed, till we arrived at Jiddama, and penetrated its noble gorge, which has a grand supply of water. It might be useful if ever this route is required for military purposes. In this valley were stone circles, similar, I imagine, to those described by visitors to Sinai. Now it was time to turn eastwards, and we once more faced the waterless plain. At last the thin dark line of the palms of Keneh appeared, and gradually took individual shape as we approached. Then the most beautiful mirage appeared. The palm-trees seemed to be growing on islands and to fringe the wide lagoon with luxuriance. The witchcraft was broken in upon by a prosaic chimney and puffing steam, in connection with a gooleh factory, all reflected on the burnished surface.

Soon we left the patient stillness of the desert and heard the hum of life. The sun flashed on the bronzy wings of doves and steel-blue of pigeons. The rustle of palm-leaves was broken by the creaking and groaning of shadoufs, and the splash of water raised by them. How different the people, too, from the nomads behind us! These last have little to do but watch their starveling flocks; little, too, to eat. No ripple from the storms of the outside world reaches this backwater. The Fellaheen, on the other hand, are busy all day long. The generous Nile mud, in which they sow their seeds, smiles back upon them with green blades. They have no care or anxiety, unless the Nile rises a foot higher or a foot lower than the

normal, or the tax-gatherer tickles them with the kourbash. I wonder which race is the happier ; or are we Northerners better off with our fretting life, and machines, and books, and endless strife ? Why does not some Edison invent a delicate balance for weighing happiness ? Anyhow I am certain that a month in the desert with chosen companions would rank high.



THE FELLAH AND HIS RIVER.

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1

IV

STONY SINAI

"ABOUT noon we saw a beast standing on a mountain-top looking down at us. When we saw it, we thought that it was a camel, but Calinus said the beast was a rhinoceros or unicorn. It hath a horn set in the midst of its forehead, four feet long, and whatsoever it butts at it runs him through and pounds him against the rocks. It is said by writers on natural history that they place a young virgin in his way, whereat he puts away from him all his fierceness, and lays down his head, and is held thus entranced until he be taken and slain."

Thus wrote that delightfully naïve observer, Father Felix Fabri, who visited Sinai four hundred years ago. Modern pilgrims, who have followed in his footsteps with their eyes open, will at once recognise that the animal he saw was the 'bedan,' or Sinaitic ibex, which gazes down on passing caravans from the cliffs towering above their route. He is seldom visible to them unless his shapely figure happens to be silhouetted on the sky-line. This wild goat inhabits the mountains on either side of the Red Sea and the steep gullies of Moab, and is the only

representative of the deer or goat tribes in these regions.¹ Esau doubtless hunted it, and those few sportsmen who have followed his example will not be surprised that the uncertainties of the chase cost him his birthright.

As described in the last chapter, I had visited the granite ranges on the west of the Gulf of Suez, but, after a fortnight's quest, I returned without having once fired my rifle, though I captured alive an adult female ibex, perhaps a unique experience. The range of Sinai, on the opposite side of the Gulf, is loftier than the peaks which face them, and therefore precipitates more moisture, and, where water gathers, there is food for man and beast. Here, then, I hoped to retrieve my previous defeat, and to do my hunting in the company of men of an unfamiliar race. In travelling a new country and hunting a new beast it is part of the game to study the habits, not only of the animal, but also of the human animal. Sinai being isolated on two sides by dangerous coasts, and on the third by a desert, the thin thread of communication with their fellow-men has not disturbed the customs of these Amalekites since kings of the Third Dynasty sent expeditions from Egypt to delve for turquoise and copper, or when, many centuries later, another invading host, under one Moses, drove them from their wells.

¹ Unless we believe Diodorus the Sicilian, who wrote in the second century B.C., and perhaps took his traditions from a much earlier age. He describes many strange beasts as inhabiting the countries bordering on the Red Sea; *e.g.* sphinxes, which he says are "bred near to the Troglodytes, not unlike those which the limners draw, save that they differ in being rough. They are of a gentle nature, very docile, apt to learn anything presently that is taught to them."



WE LAND AT TOR.

The romance of camel-riding soon wears off, and, as a pastime, it is to be avoided whenever possible. To escape the week's land journey to the great granite range which occupies the point of the Sinaitic peninsula, we arranged to be landed by a Khedivial steamer at the little fishing village of Tor, which lies opposite to the highest peaks. The coast of the Red Sea and Gulf of Suez is lined with coral reefs, and there are no harbours, except where some torrent course brings down, at rare intervals, such a weight of water as to force a channel through the outer barrier. Tor commands such a gap, but its harbour is hardly worthy of the name, and our steamer did not venture inside it. Even the fishing-boats, which took us off, could not reach the shore, and the last thirty yards of our voyage were accomplished on the shoulders of Arabs.

The score or so of houses are all built of coral, great masses of the radiating kind, with others like fossil sponges. Our dragoman, Joseph, who had arrived by land, awaited us on the little pier; but he had prudently removed his camp to a palm-grove two miles off, to be out of the way of the village ruffian. There is a Government official here, in whose house we drank a ceremonial cup of coffee, and a branch establishment of the convent of St. Katharine. With the monks who occupy the latter we also thought it prudent to establish friendly relations. Here, too, lives a patriarchal Greek merchant, who was anxious to do the honours of the place. He was disappointed to hear that I was not a lord, but I told him that I was a brewer, which is the next thing to a lord. He was glad of that, and was sure I should be a lord the next time I came that way.

We had no desire to remain at Tor, for the whole granite range from Serbal to Jebel et Thebet rose majestically like a ruined wall at a distance of fifteen miles, and we hoped to escape as soon as possible from the dismal plain, and invade its most secret recesses. Um Shomer was the most striking peak. The sacred summit dedicated to Abou Mousa was invisible, being hidden by the loftier Jebel Katarina. At this distance the deep ravines which carve the granite into fantastic folds, before debouching on the plain, could not be distinguished. Of these one only, Wady Hebran, is easy for camels, and another, Wady Isleh, twenty miles to the south of it, is barely passable by them. The latter is rarely followed by travellers, but it contains the finest defiles, and is in a more direct line to the country which I desired to hunt. It was therefore by this staircase that I proposed to penetrate to the interior. On announcing my intention, I was at once met, as was to be expected, by the statement of the camel sheikh that it was impossible. Joseph pleased me by seconding my view, instead of backing the sluggard, as most dragomen do, and I insisted on adhering to the route chosen until insurmountable obstacles were reached, feeling tolerably confident that, at the critical point, a way would be either found or made. It must be admitted that loaded camels are nervous and clumsy on declivities which would scarcely puzzle a London cabhorse, and it is to the credit of the Bedawin that they take extreme care of their beasts, their only wealth. They have a saying that "A camel is better than a wife," and though the animal has a phlegmatic temperament, it appears to reciprocate its master's affection. On one occasion I was nearly bucked off my beast



THE KITCHEN.

because its owner had left its head to take the leading cord of a rival.

The palm grove where camp was pitched contains a sulphur spring, which first issued, according to the Arab tradition, at the command of Moses, to cure the Israelites suffering from disease. Throughout the peninsula one finds the Arab beliefs inspired by the Mosaic story, and Abou Mousa is revered by Mahommedans as well as Christians.

Two miles farther back lies the low sandstone range of Jebel Nagus, whence issue mysterious sounds. Here once stood a monastery—so runs the tale—established in this secret place by monks fleeing from persecution. The retreat was betrayed to their pursuers by a wandering Arab, who had received alms, but when the band of marauders sought to surprise it, the building had been miraculously enfolded in the mountain, and nothing remains but a vast slope of sand; but ever since the sound of the wooden gong, which the monks use, is heard at sunset summoning to vespers.

I should have been glad to reach the gates of the mountains that evening, and hastened off our long train of camels as soon as they could be loaded up; but it is always desirable to allow plenty of time to shake down at the first camp, so we halted early, in the middle of the plain. The sun set behind the fine cone of Jebel Gharib on the opposite side of the sea, and far to the south of it we recognised the faint but familiar outlines of the Porphyry Mountain and the Kittar range, on the slopes of which we had disported ourselves the previous year. Our camp looked pretty on the sandy plain, which glowed

in the sunset, while the still waters of the Gulf reflected the slanting rays. Reddest of all were the stately buttresses of Um Shomer, "made for wild goats," we said to ourselves, as we closed our glasses with a snap at the summons to dinner. Anastasius, our cook, distinguished himself, and it was pleasant to watch him over his iron trough of charcoal, blowing it up in one part to a hot glow with the wing of a chicken, and deftly moderating it at the other end with lumps of dead charcoal.

The plain of El Gaah, which separates the sea from the range, is a dreary strip, fifteen miles wide, waterless, and therefore lifeless. From it the mountains rise abruptly, and without a transition stage. In the morning, after four hours' march, we rode straight into the cavernous portals of Wady Isleh. Once within its narrow walls shade and trickling water were quickly attained.

On a rock face at the opening of the valley we found Sinaitic inscriptions and archaic pictures chipped out, in a grotesque style, of camels and ibex, similar to some which I had observed on the Egyptian side of the Gulf. Here, too, we met a solitary and ragged Arab, who looked in keeping with the wildness of the spot. This was a hunter who had been sent for by our camel sheikh. His name is Sbhr. I do not know if this is the way he spells it, but it is pronounced like that. As we got very fond of Sbhr, I mention him where he entered our little stage.

That afternoon we climbed the sides of the gorge to look for "sign" of goats. What little there was was old, but there had been no rain here, and consequently the *hasheesh*, or herbs, had not begun to grow.

Our tents were pitched by groups of palms and groves



WADI ISLEH.

of giant reeds with yellow stems. Palms are found in all the Sinaitic ravines where there is water, but that is by no means everywhere. In such torrent-swept gorges only those are able to hold their own whose roots are anchored in jutting rocks. The great smooth boulders by which they are surrounded add very much to the incomparable beauty of the groups, which have survived by their aid, and give them a wayward and natural grace which they want when planted on the plain. A tree still more remarkable for its holding power is the *tarfah*, or tamarisk, which we encountered in many places at a higher elevation. This is perhaps the most tenacious-rooted tree in nature. The largest specimen which I saw grew in a narrow rocky gorge, where the weight of the flood must be all but irresistible. Three or four stones, as large as tea-chests, were jammed among the forks of the branches, higher than the top of my head. These must have been whirled and wedged there by the force of the current.

The flat, gravelly bottom of the ravine was the road which we travelled the following morning. In places the rocky walls approached within six yards of one another, and, 200 feet overhead, were scarcely farther apart. In such narrows, though the bed of the stream is ordinarily dry, the torrent had left its mark unmistakably, in polished edges, to a height of at least 150 feet. The tropical storms, or *Seils*, which occasionally burst on these mountains, run off the bare walls of rock as from the roof of a house, and where, as in this case, a large area is drained by a narrow trench, the flood pours down with amazing suddenness and power, and subsides with almost equal rapidity.

Farther up the bottom was cumbered with boulders, and difficulties began. Progress was slow, for many times the heaviest loads had to be removed, and carried over some granite shelf, while our sheikh stood on a commanding rock gesticulating his orders. When there is the slightest dampness on the rocks the smooth pads of the camels' feet slip like indiarubber. The necklaces of cowrie shells and shirt-buttons, which they wore as an amulet against stumbling, did not always avail, for two or three of them fell, and made the rocks echo with their protests. Camels have a shrewd eye for the weight of their loads, and expostulate freely if they think too much is being exacted from them. When M. opened her white umbrella her beast objected strongly. The first time she did it he stopped dead, turned his head round in her face, and roared. He evidently wished it to be understood that he could not possibly stand another package of that size; but finding that his complaints were not attended to, he satisfied his conscience by walking at the slowest pace which could be called any progress at all.

At three o'clock we stopped, as for several hours' farther there was no other camping-place safe from a sudden invasion of water. This was annoying, as we had hoped to reach that night the foot of a mountain said to contain ibex. Camps have also, of course, to be chosen with some reference to the proximity of water, but it is not an essential condition; it was the business of the camel sheikh to see that our barrels were kept supplied, however far he had to send for it.

Leaving the ladies to make a short move of ten miles with the camp, we who designed to hunt started by moon-



ONE CAMEL DOWN.

light the next morning, and reached our proposed beat by daylight. Here we left our riding camels and followed a ravine full of tamarisk, and, when that came to an end, struck straight up the side of the mountain. When the proper elevation had been reached, we turned along the side of the ridge, keeping a few hundred feet below the top of it. Soon we noticed ibex beds, little bare places where they had scratched away the stones before lying. Sbhr wore a confident air, and removed his sandals of fishes' skin, to walk more silently, and to get a better hold on the rocks. He said the wind was "kidy, kidy, ouf ouf,"—an opinion in which I concurred on this and many subsequent occasions. He tested it continually by throwing up handfuls of dust, the lighter portions of which floated as a little cloud. He also prayed fervently that the wind might keep steady. He showed his intelligence by quickly accustoming himself to use the opera-glass. But the telescope was beyond him. I was pleased to find that my Arabic, though limited, was sufficient. I made him understand that Celestin, my companion in many hunts, was a *Sayad* or hunter like himself, and must have time to use the glass. He himself, of course, relied mainly on his eyes, and presently showed that they served him well. Arrived at a corner, a fresh turn of the valley and wild chaos of rocks came into view; Sbhr's gaze became fixed, and he carefully shaded his eyes from the sun. Then he turned to me for the field-glass, adjusted it, looked again, gently withdrew, and held up one finger; then, behind the rock, he executed a triumphant caper. I soon had my glass on a fine *Taytal*, or male ibex, lying on a large slab of granite in the full sunshine, like a sphinx on

its pedestal, and presently made out part of the back of another.

I had now to diplomatise with Sbhr, and to explain to him how important it was that he and W., who had generously abandoned his rights in my favour, should remain there to watch while I made the approach with Celestin, in whom, of the two, I still had the greatest faith as a stalker. He covered himself with glory by submitting with a good grace. The ibex were nearly on a level with us, and about five hundred yards off. We had to retreat and mount to the ridge, so as to approach them from above. Arrived at the top, we again sighted them, but while we moved to a better place they had disappeared. For some time we sought in vain with the glass, and at length, in some humiliation, had to return to our companions. Sbhr wore a triumphant air, thinking we had given it up, and pointed to himself. The ibex were still visible from this point. We now made out four, and, for greater certainty, waited till they lay down, specially noting the position of the biggest. Then together we climbed once more to the top, and took a hasty lunch by way of steadying our nerves for the steep downward climb. When Celestin and I again started, Sbhr seized my hand and pointed to heaven, with great earnestness invoking the blessing of the good Allah upon our success. I thought this was nice of him. He also showed his zeal by pressing his skull cap upon Celestin, a privilege which the latter declined. Reclining with their heads over the edge, he and W. watched us from above. The rocks were good, and in twenty minutes we had made the descent. We reached the point from which, from above, it had seemed we should



A SHELTERED CORNER.

get a shot, but on arriving there we could not make them out. Once more we moved on. Celestin looked over, and beckoned me up. There was the biggest ram still lying in the same position. A small one standing close to him saw the movement of our heads and looked up, but without alarming the others.

The Sinaitic ibex is perhaps the smallest of the wild-goat tribe. They are not only extremely difficult to see, but offer what seems a very inadequate mark. This one looked both far and small, though I daresay it was not more than a hundred yards away. I thought I had held straight, but at the shot he went off with the rest and disappeared instantly into a little ravine. There was a great clatter of stones, and when they reappeared on the other side we counted no less than six ibex, but none of them seemed big enough for the gentleman I had marked as my own. One of them offered a fair shot, but I reserved my fire in case the wounded one should appear. Then, after a pause, we hurried down and looked into the ravine. For a time we could see nothing, but presently something groaned; then the poor old goat stumbled out from behind a rock, turned round, and fell dead. We raised a shout to inform our friends above, and descended to smoke a pipe and gloat over the first success. The head was a very pretty one, but by no means of the largest. It taped nearly thirty inches.

Before turning homewards we climbed once more to the summit of the ridge, which rose to a height of nearly seven thousand feet. We failed to make out any more goats, but were rewarded with a wonderful view of splintered peaks to the east, through a gap in which we looked down on to

the Gulf of Akaba, the eastern branch of the Red Sea. A heavy cloud overhead cast the jagged ridges into shadow, and they looked sombre against the pale gleam of water. Beyond that was an immense yellow plain, and far into Arabia the lowering sun behind us shone on faintly luminous mountains, which seemed loftier than those we were on. In this climate the evening and the morning light reveals many mysteries. In the other direction, the double peak of Um Shomer, grandest of all, though not quite the highest of the range, was flecked with snow patches on its northern side.

Returning to our quarry, we found Sbhr engaged in stitching his garments, an occupation in which he always spent his idle moments, only varying it by sewing up the cuts in his feet and legs, which, after a few more days of rock jumping, wanted repair as much as his clothes. I particularly remember a fantastic pattern in blue cotton on his heel, which he exhibited with some pride, and which showed a dawning of decorative design. The ibex was hastily skinned and cut up, so that it should pack close and Sbhr might carry it *more arabico* in its skin, a task which, for three hours, he performed without a murmur over a rough country. It grew quite dark before we reached the camp on the plain of Rahabeh, and the beacon-lights which Joseph had providently set for our guidance were welcome.

We had now reached the central plateau of the peninsula, and henceforth for a month the average elevation of our camps was over five thousand feet. Frosts were often sharp at night, and the air, even at midday, was fresh and bracing. Meat which had been brought from Suez was



DIFFICULT GROUND—A PORTAGE NECESSARY.

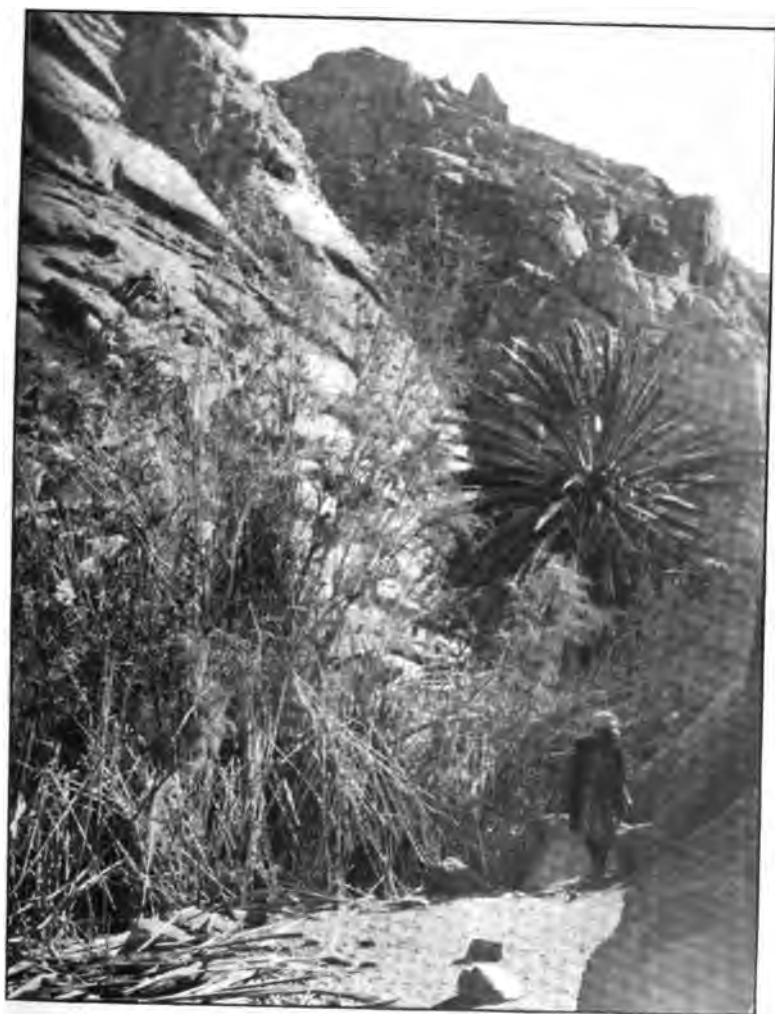
in excellent condition at the end of three weeks. I sometimes wonder whether our northern medicos in search of new *sanatoria* will discover the healing virtues of this Southern Engadine. Only our poor Bedawin, clad in the meanest rags, suffered severely at night. They lay in half a dozen little camps, with no other protection against the weather than their fires of desert scrub, which gives a moment's flame but little heat. In the morning they were so torpid with cold that it was hard to get them to start. At the first pause they would pull up two or three dry plants, and, in less time than it takes to write, would be crouching over a blaze. At every opportunity during the day an Arab repeats this process, and so constant is the collection of fuel that, if in hunting, the ibex are disturbed, the hunter endeavours to disarm their suspicions by stooping and moving slowly about, as if engaged in the one occupation which is always going on. Certainly it often has the effect of causing the herd to stop and gaze.

Each night we called a council after dinner and discussed many things with our people. Our hunters were summoned, and while Joseph interpreted, their swarthy faces peered through the tent door into the light, and when the conference was over they received a handful of tobacco, coveted even more than food. These men were as anxious for a successful hunt as we could desire, but their advice was not always sound. They are like children, and think that if they have observed a thing once, it will always recur. In my opinion, the sinister reputation which has, to some extent, attached to these Arabs of Sinai since the tragic murder of Professor Palmer, at the time of the Arabi rebellion, is quite undeserved. They were probably induced

by secret messages from Cairo to regard his mission to obtain camels as an act of war, and they treated him and his companions as they, and their people, have always treated their enemies. I found them trustworthy. They drive a hard bargain, but, this ratified, the conditions are faithfully kept. Their goats are tended on the mountains by the unmarried girls, a sure sign of good manners. My daughters soon found that they could wander, unattended, for many miles from camp, secure of an unaffectedly gracious reception from any casual tent-dweller that they met. Could this be said of any civilised country on the shores of the Mediterranean?

Though living in tents, the Sinaitic tribes are not strictly nomadic, but have summer and winter quarters, following the feed. Their little stores are generally deposited in stone-built granaries, which are often left unvisited by the owner for months. The Arab's only capital is his camel. That the return is not large may be judged from the fact that when I had occasion to send to Suez and back, to take and receive letters, a distance of two hundred and forty miles, my messenger received thirty shillings. Violent crimes are not common, but occasional blood feuds are relentlessly maintained between families—the blood vengeance being, by custom, *obligatory* on the next of kin.

They are full of terrors of the invisible world. At the same time charms and love-philters are much in vogue. I have been told that if the loved one be stroked with the nose of a cold boiled hyena, the effect is surprising. Like other orientals, they profess a fatalism which is sometimes an excuse for laziness. I told Achmet to take my gun and



ROCKS AND JUNGLE.

1

shoot me some *Wabhr* for specimens. Returning early to camp, I found him still sitting over the fire, and asked him why he had not obeyed my instructions. He said: "If it is Allah's will that I should shoot *Wabhr*, he would send *Wabhr* to me." I told him that if Allah wished Achmet to have backsheesh, that Arab would find it up his sleeve, but he would get none from me. This man was a hanger-on of the convent. There was a marked contrast between his features and the keen, hawk-like faces of the ordinary run of Bedawin. His prominent dreamy eyes and sleepy expression pointed to an origin far to the east of Arabia. The convent, which is a holy place to Mahommedans as well as Christians, has attracted the blood of many races. The dried bodies of two Indian princes clad in armour remain still in the mortuary.

I have already mentioned the striking peak of Um Shomer. The Arabs have many superstitions with regard to this mountain, and Palmer mentions their belief in mysterious explosions which are heard proceeding from it. Now, sometime later, when I was on one of the peaks near Mount Serbal, and about thirty miles from the former mountain, we heard a single very loud report, which resembled the distant boom of a heavy gun. My Arab at once said, "Hark! Um Shomer." The native accompanying W., who was hunting on another range, made the same remark. My daughters at the camp far below also heard it, and their followers told them the same thing. In the evening we tried through our dragoman to elicit an explanation. This was Sbhr's story: "Long before Abou Mousa lived, an ibex-hunter on that mountain met a beautiful damsel with hair that swept the ground. She was gracious

to him, but forbade him to follow her. He, however, tried to pursue her, but she placed an enormous rock in his way, and it is there to this day. She has been angry ever since, and makes this noise two or three times a year."

"But isn't the noise made by a big rock falling?"

"There are big rocks everywhere, but this noise is only heard from Um Shomer. It is not outside the mountain at all, but inside."

"How do you know this, Sbhr?"

"My grandfather told me, and his father told him."

That is the only source of knowledge, but that such traditions are handed down with little alteration is proved by their practical identity in all parts of the peninsula.

Joseph then offered the following lucid explanation:—

"You see, Sare, there is an image in that mountain, and when the metal get hot he burst. But I b'lieve nothink." I am no nearer to a solution, but the boom which we heard was real enough.

The Bedawin have a profound faith in every European as a *hakim*, or healer. At El Mayer I noticed a poor woman signalling to me from behind a rock. She was evidently very anxious that her forwardness should not be observed by the other Arabs. The two babes, which she had brought from a considerable distance, were living skeletons, and beyond my aid. I can only hope that the hot lemonade and soup which I prescribed comforted the mother's heart, and did not hasten the end, which came a few days after. Owing to exposure, and wretched food, the infant mortality among these people is great. To put it bluntly, the population of these barrens is kept at its proper level by starvation.



AMONG THE TARFAH BUSHES.

The first night at Wady Nasb the storm rattled over our canvas roofs as if the mountains were made of sheet iron, and all the stones were loose, but we were not otherwise affected. We had placed our tents on a raised bank well above the valley bottom, and the kitchen tent occupied a similar position on the opposite side. As I peered out into the darkness, it was fitfully illuminated by the flashes, and I wondered whether we should be separated from our breakfast by a raging torrent. Though we escaped even this inconvenience, the storm was the most disastrous which has occurred since that of 1867, described by Mr. Holland. Two other camps of Europeans in different parts of the peninsula were invaded by the flood, and some of their possessions lost. We soon heard news of Sbhr's camp, which we had passed three days before. Though his family had just had time to escape to the rocks, many of his goats and donkeys had been swept away, but he announced with great cheerfulness that his tents had been caught on the bushes lower down the valley, and recovered. We were told of two Arabs who were known to have entered the gorge of Wady Isleh, which we had ascended. The bodies of their camels were found washed out on to the plain; the bodies of the men were never seen again. We had projected a return later on by the same route, but the ravine had been so wrecked with boulders that it was impracticable. In other parts of the peninsula many lives were lost.

Our hunting next day was accompanied by an unusual sound of many waters, but the rivulets disappeared as soon as they reached the wider ravines, being absorbed by the grit and sand which form their bed. Ibex were numerous,

and I soon annexed another ram, but the herds generally consisted of females or very small rams. Accompanied by my daughters, I made another successful approach, which was not the less interesting that, when we got within range, there proved to be nothing worth shooting. This happens frequently when the herd is viewed from below, in which case it is impossible to see every member of it at once. The worst of such a stalk is that it is discouraging to the Arabs, who hunt for the pot, and regard it as wasted labour when it results in no meat. The females, which in this species are so small as to be easily mistaken for kids, are very alert, and when a slight movement attracted their attention, began whistling. This, which is their characteristic alarm-note, is more like the thin pipe of a bird than the snorting hiss of a wild sheep. Even when we rose and waved at them they continued to stand, covering the retreat of the main body. This habit of theirs spoilt another stalk the same evening. In that case there was a ram of good proportions. They had had some inkling of danger, and began slowly climbing upwards, while I stealthily followed. Twice I got within easy range, but the body-guard of females stood sentinel while his majesty retreated with great deliberation, and I could only see his horns. At last they were fairly frightened, and set off at full speed. I tried to cut them off, but only succeeded in getting a long, running shot, which I missed.

I had secured two rams within a fortnight of leaving London, but it must not be assumed from this that the chase is an easy one. My companion hunted on twelve successive days without getting a shot. Of the only two Englishmen who, within my knowledge, had come here



SNUG QUARTERS.

previously to our visit, to hunt these goats, one obtained a single specimen, and the other struck his colours at the end of a fortnight, for the sufficient reason that he had worn out all his boots before he had achieved even that measure of success.

Although there are a fair number of goats on all the ranges throughout the peninsula, the primary difficulty is to find them. Their colour is almost indistinguishable from the broken rocks among which they live, and which baffle even an expert telescopist to "pick them up," though after a time he learns that the horns and the small black mark on the knees are the points best worth looking for. Even when found, the restless habit of the *bedan*, in common with all other goats, breaks the heart of the hunter. When he has reached the last corner, and thinks success assured, they have vanished into one of the unsuspected breaches or hollows which honeycomb the cliff. It is the habit of the males to rise suddenly on their hind feet and butt one another. The crash of horns thus made sometimes betrays them to the enemy. In the absence of such guidance it is generally safe to predict that they will be low down after a cold night, and will slowly move higher and higher as the heat of the day increases. The wind in these ranges is a treacherous friend. Even on fine days it comes whirling round the wrong corners at critical moments. In stormy weather it blows in every direction within five minutes, and the hunter may e'en sulk in his tent, for a successful approach is a sheer impossibility.

Few of the Arabs are sufficiently enterprising to stalk the goats in their rocky fastnesses. The strategy which they prefer is to wait in ambush by some water-hole to

which the animals must resort in a drought, and, if the chance comes, neither age nor sex is respected.

In case any one should think of following in our footsteps, I may mention, as a fair measure of their chances, that I actually hunted on twenty-four days, and that I used in all eleven cartridges, which included all "shots of despair"—that is, running or second shots, and some fired at long distances when I had waited in vain for a better chance. I secured six *taytal*, i.e. rams, and my companion, W., had four; while C., who came out with us, but made a separate camp, also had to be contented with four, but one of his was better worth getting than all the others. I reckon that I climbed in that time about eighty thousand feet vertical. And we thus perhaps wasted more tissue than we captured. As the rocks are big and loose, and there are no soft places, the jar caused by jumping down steps of four or five feet at a time tells on joints which have seen service. Even in sitting down the nether man pays a price. Spying is a delightful occupation, but after half an hour spent in that way, the perch on these rickety rocks becomes a veritable stool of repentance. Here, however, the resources of civilisation are not exhausted. On the same principle that pilgrims boil their peas, I carry a small tough pillow in my *rucksack*, not for my head, but for the solace of the other end. Something must be conceded to the wrong side of fifty, and I commend this discovery to sportsmen who are not well cushioned by nature. It is good for the temper and saves tailors' bills.

It is surprising that travellers who reach the convent do not extend their journey into the southern part of the peninsula, where the scenery is incomparably finer than



WADI NASB.

1

any to be seen on the customary routes, and where the natives are unspoilt by the contemptuous patronage of the monks. Our camp in Wady Nasb¹ was pitched at the entrance to a ravine grander than anything I saw elsewhere in stony Sinai. It had, perhaps, never been explored, and certainly has not been described, by Europeans. The cliffs of this splendid gorge, which not even the ibex can climb, exhibit all the richest tints—pink, ochre, and purple—which distinguish the granites and porphyries of those regions, and the wealth of colour reaches its climax in the masses of golden-stemmed reed lining the little perennial stream, which here flows over silver sand, and there expands into an oozy bottom. So rankly do these grow in this hothouse that their white plumes mingle with the waving fronds of the palms thirty feet from the ground. When we forced our way through this jungle, our cavalcade of thirty camels was completely hidden by the tropical vegetation, but the crashing of the canes, the loud-voiced complaints of the camels, and the wild shouts of their owners, were magnified by the walls of the narrow chasm as by the throat of a trumpet, and made such thunder-music as I shall not soon forget.

Above the gorge there is a large grove of Tarfah trees and a colony of Arabs. Here there were some signs of cultivation, and partridges called from the rocks. Animal life is scarce in Sinai, and what there is is extremely invisible. In a well-watered country there is every variety of colour, and, however closely matched Nature's children may be by their favourite covert, the moment

¹ This must not be confounded with the minor valley of that name near Serabit el Khadem, on one of the ordinary routes to the convent.

they stray from it they become conspicuous. Not so in a desert country, where there is little range in the warm sandy tones to which bird and beast conform, for their protection. The only exception to this rule which I observed is a certain "chat" with a black body and white head, one or more of which birds were generally to be found near camp, and always prominently perched on a rock. The Bedawin call it "Abou Sulieman." So easy a prey must have some other protection, perhaps a detestable flavour. I carried small traps, and a block-tin case of spirit, into which I popped things with four legs, things with two, and things with no legs at all. Sometimes it was a fat-headed lizard, sometimes a "porcupine" mouse, so called from the stiff bristles with which his back is armed, and which, no doubt, make him unpleasant to swallow. More often a sandy-coloured lark or tit. Once W. brought home in his telescope-case a thin dust-coloured snake, four or five feet long, with a dangerous-looking flat head, of which the Arabs stood in great dread. He was only partly stunned, and when we shook him into the fiery liquor he took the bath with a vicious hiss. I think that my bag of small deer would have been larger, but that most of them were still hibernating at these elevations. One morning, on waking, I noticed a small heap of freshly-turned sand close to my face. I was sure it had not been there when I turned in, and proceeded to investigate. On turning back the ground sheet I found a newly-made tunnel quite a yard long immediately under it. My bed had been laid on the concealed hole of one of the desert rats, which in some places honeycomb the surface. He had found his



HASSAN SPYING.

quarters getting so hot that he must have jumped to the conclusion that the genial spring had arrived. He had gnawed through the ground sheet, but finding my mattress, or me, too tough, had bored his way out through the sand. To prevent injury to the specimens I made little mummies of most of my catches by wrapping them in sections of the above-mentioned cane, which grows in the wet wadies. When I finally opened my cauldron at the British Museum, and revealed the precious broth it contained, Mr. Thomas pounced upon one of my mice, a fellow with big transparent ears, and called it by my name. Afterwards the mouse and I had to descend from this pedestal, for somebody, it appeared, had discovered it before.

Of all the mammals that exist in Sinai, the leopard is the largest, and the one which we most desired to see. Though we constantly found fresh tracks, and our telescopes were always exploring likely places, we never set eyes on it. It is, of course, of nocturnal habit, yet it must often take its siesta in places exposed to view. We frequently found remains of ibex newly killed by it, and, as it was thus in pursuit of the same animal as we were, it was strange that we never ran against one. Once, when we were out before light, I heard a feline growl, whereat the native with me exclaimed, "Hark! the Nimr!" But I am bound to say that the sound was not unlike the peevish snarling of one of our camels in the camp below. At one lair where an ibex had been devoured, masses of hair lay about, but no skin nor any other remains except the horns. Sbhr explained that the leopard's tongue is very rough, and that he licks off the hair, and then

devours everything else. There is evidence that in the process he swallows a good deal of the hair too.

Gazelle are scarce in Sinai, but my daughters had a strange encounter with one, the only example seen by any of us. They were riding along the sandy bottom of a wady, when one of these animals was seen retreating in front. Their Arab attendant said there was a tarfah grove beyond, and that he would not pass through it, fearing an ambush. Nor could he scale the steep rocks forming the sides of the ravine. Sure enough, after some hesitation, back he came at full gallop, and passed within five yards of the party, turning a complete somersault in his haste and terror. The kodak, hastily withdrawn from its case, of course would not go off at the critical moment.

The *wabhr*, or coney, is a quaint, tailless beast like a marmot, but with an unusual dentition. The upper pair of incisors, instead of meeting the lower pair like those of rodents, pass on either side of them, and have the appearance of small tusks. Its nearest relative is the hippopotamus.

The plain of Es Sened, about ten miles south of the convent, was one of our favourite camps. It is studded with strange smooth bosses of granite like inverted tea-cups, as though the molten mass had been thrown up in bubbles; but doubtless wind-blown sand was the potent tool which carved and polished them. The plain, though sheltered on the west by a semicircle of tall crags—the home of many ibex—is sufficiently elevated to overlook the lesser ranges to the north and east, so that we could watch the magic of the evening light on the long white cliff which forms the edge of the “Tih,” or Desert of the



CYPRESS AND ALMOND BLOSSOM.



Wanderings, and which brought out in conspicuous rose colour the lofty Arabian range beyond the great trench, of which the Gulf of Akaba fills one end and the Dead Sea the other.

It was at Es Sened that I had the worst luck, and as this article would not give a faithful picture of goat-hunting unless I described some of the disappointing vicissitudes which befell me, I will describe a part of my experiences there. Two *Taytal* with unusually massive horns had been more than once observed by us on the peak of Um Alawi, and were the object of our keenest desire. I had been going all day without seeing anything, and, to finish up, went right over the top of that peak, the tallest of the group. Now my enterprising ladies had taken it into their heads to explore in this direction, and, crossing the ridge at a lower point, must have given the wind to the family party to which these patriarchs were attached. We saw the band about three hundred yards off, galloping towards us as hard as they could. They seemed to be making for a pass on the other side of a certain group of rocks. Could we reach it before they did? We ran for this shelter, and when close to it caught a glimpse of a young one not twenty yards above us. It passed without perceiving us, and I made another dash for the rocks. When I looked over, there, at a distance of fifty yards, or maybe less, was the father of the flock, standing at attention, his great horns—I have no doubt they were forty inches—they always are under such circumstances—curving over his flanks. Now I ought to have known from the fixity of his gaze that he had seen something, and that the pause would be a very brief one. I should

have fired instantly as I stood. Instead of that I tried to make more certain by drawing forward a few inches for an elbow rest. The slight movement was sufficient. He recognised an enemy, and began that series of bouncing jumps, now up four feet, then down six, which is so annoying to the rifleman, and he continued to do so with unabated vigour after my bullet had sped. But there was another as big. I jumped down the rocks and sat down on the other side, in a firm position, waiting for him. As I expected, he came along, and behaved beautifully. Not seeing his companions, he stopped in the right place, offering a perfect chance. Here, at least, was, seemingly, a certainty; but the cartridge missed fire, and he was round the corner before I could slip in another. There were words about that gunmaker. Nothing was left for us but the long clamber downwards to camp. We had reached the level of the plain, and were going carelessly, because nothing was to be expected there, when I saw the same band again quietly feeding in front of us. Celestin, usually so much quicker sighted than I, did not observe them, and, as he was a few yards in front, I failed to stop him in time, or get the rifle in hand. Even this did not fill up the cup of my misfortunes. On another day we again saw the two veterans, keeping a bright outlook on the top of the peak. They disappeared, but, later in the day, we re-found them lying in the middle of a cliff. Their position was well chosen for security, as they commanded every approach, but, while they were in brilliant sunshine, we were in the shade, and were able to take advantage of this fact to creep within three hundred yards. Further advance was impossible, but we made sure that



THE PILGRIMS QUARTERS.



they must take their supper in the ravine which divided us, and, buoyed up by this hope, for three hours we endured a piercing wind. This the females did, feeding unconcernedly to within easy range, but the rams had unaccountably disappeared. At length they showed far below, at an impossible distance, having descended by a gully invisible to us. After all, these are the bitters which one takes for an appetite, but it must be admitted that the taste remains long in the mouth.

My Arab was much troubled by my ill-fortune on this and other occasions, and he regarded it as a bewitchment which might be cured. He urged that some spell should be used which would counter-work the devil. From the recesses of his sleeve a mysterious packet was solemnly produced, which contained a powder like chopped hay, and he told me that a sovereign specific against the bad luck was for the hunter to load his gun with a portion of the dried contents of the stomach of a bedan previously killed by him. He offered to give me some of the precious compound, but he doubted its vicarious efficacy. I ought, so he said, to have reserved some from one of my own bedan; but, in default of this, he was good enough to say a little prayer over each of my cartridges, which precaution he thought would be sufficient, and for this he charged nothing.

In the early centuries of our era pious men crowded into Sinai to escape persecution, or to seek a retreat from the world. In numerous gorges, even among the wildest surroundings, where there is permanent water, there are remains of walls and gardens—the attempts of these pioneers to reclaim Nature. The Convent of St. Katharine,

built by Justinian, is the only one of these extensive monastic settlements which remains occupied. Towards this all routes and all pilgrims converge. It has a varied literature, which I will not attempt to extend, for it strikes me that there has been a trifle too much sentiment wasted on the monks already.

The lofty walls have the appearance of a fortress, which purpose indeed they are intended to serve. The garden is a small oasis surrounded by uncompromising rocks. Out of a cloud of gladsome almond-blossom rise cypresses—thin dark spires—the only things which seem to point to heaven from within the stern enclosure. The *CEconomos*, or bursar, offers a friendly greeting to strangers, but the monks—two or three dozen of them—seem sodden with dulness. With vacant faces they dodder to the well, wag their dishevelled beards, and turn their praying-wheel; but for the poor “Saracens,” to whom these valleys belong, there is no message and no medicine for body or soul. When a monk dies he is buried for one year, after which his withered mask, as empty as the life it lived, is disinterred, and added to the ghastly stack which has been slowly piling up for a thousand years.

An old writer informs us that there used to be “three Abbots learned of tongue—that is to say, Latin, Greek, Syriac, Egyptian, and Persian.” At the present day the world-famous library is a standing reproach. The volumes, which the monks are too unlearned to read, and too lazy to tabulate, lie hugger-mugger, in three small chambers, on shelves, or piled in heaps, and some of them open, face downwards, on the floor, the prey of every kind of destructive agency. I, for one, am glad that the great



SUNRISE FROM JEBEL MUSA.

White Father of the north borrowed, and forgot to return, the chief treasure which it contained.

When we visited the convent a party of some ninety pilgrims of the Greek Church, chiefly Russians, were leaving it. They appeared to be of the peasant class, and their pilgrimage is said to be "assisted" by the Government. Many of them were women, who seemed to be in the full enjoyment of their spree. It was curious to note the contrast between these fat-faced northern *fraus* and the lean starveling Bedawin who attended on them. One and all they had ascended both Jebel Musa and Jebel Kattarina—no light labour. The body of St. Katharine, who is an object of peculiar veneration to Russian peasants, is said to have been miraculously transported to the top of the latter mountain.

The sacred summit of Jebel Musa, which towers for more than two thousand feet above the fortress-convent, has been venerated by too many generations to be vulgarised even by the over-numerous sites of Mosaic incidents which have been accumulated round its base by the monks. We climbed the ancient rock staircase, thinking of the countless processions of pilgrims to whom this final sacrifice has been, for ages, the climax of their labours. The summit is crowned by two little chapels, the one devoted to Islam, the other to the Cross. In the mountain stillness they seemed to forget their bloody rivalries, and to tolerate one another. We had ascended in the night, and reached the final ridge before the sun rose out of a sea of cloud—an unusual phenomenon. The island peaks rose out of the white fleecy plain, showing black against the growing light. Between two of them the shining lake of vapour

seemed to pour over in a broad Niagara to a lower level, curling up again in wreathing masses, between which were black depths which the eye could not penetrate. Perhaps Antoninus Martyr, who was a pilgrim here in the sixth century, saw something of the same sort, for he says: "Upon those mountains rain never falls, and in their recesses during the night unclean spirits are seen rolling about like fleeces of wool or waves of the sea." Turning our backs to the sun, the rounded summits of Ras Suf Safeh glowed like burnished copper. We tried to descend by a steep gully facing the plain of Er Rahah, where, according to the tradition, the Israelites were assembled to receive the law; but if Moses carried the tables by that way, we could find no practicable route, and had to retrace our steps and effect a descent by a somewhat less direct passage; but even this was rather critical, owing to the hoar frost, which still clung to the rocks and made them dangerously slippery to our rubber-soled boots.

After leaving the convent our course lay to the north, and, though we explored the recesses of many mountains and glens hitherto unvisited, our camps were generally pitched in comparatively familiar valleys, which have been often described.

Ultimately we brought our wanderings to a close by following the Wadi Hebran to the coast, at Tor. Here a steamer should have called for us, according to arrangement; but it did not arrive, and we were left in suspense. Now the surroundings of Tor are not agreeable. It lies on the edge of a dead flat—I might almost say a deadly flat. It is here that the Mecca pilgrims are brought on their return from the Shrine of Mahomet, and quarantined, by



WADI HEBRON

thousands, for such time as may be necessary. Three hundred of them had died here of cholera in the previous autumn. Our only recreation was to wander along the shore, picking up shells, and some of the *disjecta membra*, which, I observed, were not calculated to raise the spirits. The authorities, whom I have mentioned before, made as much of us as if we had been occupants of the condemned cell. The Sinaitic army of occupation is quartered at Tor, and consists of twelve men. One-third of this force was told off as a guard of honour, and presented arms when we looked out of our tents. At the end of the third day of our enforced detention, although the steamer failed to arrive, the captain of it did so, *on a camel*, and with his leg bandaged up. We then learned that his ship was well fixed on a coral reef some leagues to the south, and we seemed to be more stranded than ever; but, fortunately for us, a small steam-launch had brought down a party of Germans. I succeeded in chartering it, but by that time so heavy a wind was blowing that the skipper declined to risk his light craft. When we did at last escape, the waves were still chasing one another from the north, and through or over their purple crests we danced a joyless dance all the way to Suez.

V

A MOUNTAIN STRONGHOLD IN CRETE¹

ON several occasions I have examined, from the deck of an ocean steamer, the rugged southern slope of the "White Mountains," which form the western rampart of the Island of Crete. The 27th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles has made this cliff-bound coast more familiar than household words, yet scarcely any travellers have attempted to thread its mountain passes and mazy ravines. My interest was increased by the knowledge that this stronghold is the home of a sturdy race of mountaineers, who have held their own against all comers; and I judged, from the paucity of villages and the complexity of the ridges, that here, if anywhere, would be found the survivors of the wild goat, whose effigy is engraved on the most ancient coins found in the neighbourhood, as if to typify the untamable character of its inhabitants. The district is called Sphakia and Lakkoi, and the gallant Lakkiotes, from behind their natural ramparts, have many times in this century held at bay the organised forces of the Sultan,

¹ So much has happened in Crete during the last two years, that I ought to mention that this chapter was written in 1895.

to whom this jewel of the *Ægean* belongs, and are ready, at a moment's notice, to renew the contest. Though starved into a sulky acquiescence under the hated rule, they have practically extorted treatment which is mild compared to the relations between governors and governed in other parts of the Empire.

The opportunity to gratify my curiosity in these people occurred in March 1895. The first object which met my view as I stood on the deck of the steamer about to leave the Piræus illustrated the race hatred which scourges the island. A tall man in the high boots and dark capote which are worn by the peasants of Crete, but with the demeanour of one accustomed to command, sought to hide, under the shadow of his hood, the terrible wounds which disfigured a striking face. One eye was destroyed, the second nearly so, and his cheek was deeply gashed. He had, in fact, come to Athens to learn if it were possible to save his remnant of sight. This was Nicolas Christodoulakis, a member of a redoubtable Cretan family, and himself a former captain of revolutionaries. The story told to me was—that two months previously Turkish soldiers caught a child outside his house, and when, at its cries, he looked out of his door, three charges of slugs and small shot were fired at him. The crime was said to be a case of *vendetta*, a Turkish soldier having been killed a short time before. On whichever side the fault lies heaviest, there is no doubt of the intensity of the feeling which produces a perennial crop of such outrages.

Late at night we passed Antimelos, a small steep island, or rather rock, on which the same wild goat of

which I have spoken—the *Capra Ægagrus*—found in the “White Mountains,” still exists.¹ At least it does so if the band was not exterminated, a year or two ago, by a party of Englishmen who landed, and, driving the herd at length into a place whence there was no escape, fired into them till they had killed or wounded the greater number. I regret to say that the sportsmen who committed this thoughtless act wore the Queen’s uniform. They may seek some justification in the fact that Homer’s hero made a precisely similar raid, and returned to his boats with many carcases.

The first port we touched at in Crete was Candia, a fortified Turkish town, which lies about midway of the northern coast. On one side of the harbour were sloping dry docks, covered by solid brick arches which were constructed by the Venetians when they were masters here, and into which they dragged their triremes. The principal commerce of the town seemed to consist of high yellow boots, and the food of the inhabitants of dried octopuses.

There were many Arabs and Soudanese in the streets, descendants of Egyptian soldiers, introduced here when the strong hand of Mahommed Ali gripped the island, and there is still much traffic with the African coast, and especially with the Bengazi people. From Candia we coasted westwards to Retymmo, and afterwards passed the narrow entrance to Suda Bay, one of the finest naval anchorages in the Mediterranean. It is difficult to understand the strategic considerations which induced Lord Beaconsfield, whilst he was leasing an island from the Turks, to prefer Cyprus to Crete. The former possesses

¹ It also exists on two of the other islands of the Ægean.

no defensible harbour, while, in addition to this qualification, Crete lies little out of the course between Malta and Port Said, and almost seals the Ægean.

The next morning we landed at Khaniá, and were received on the quay by our well-known Consul, Mr. Biliotti, who, notwithstanding that it was Friday, when no Turk will willingly exert himself, managed, by a combination of the *suaviter in modo* with the insistence proper to Her Majesty's representative, to secure the passage of our luggage through the Custom House. The mountains for which we were bound being in full view, we did not relish a delay in the noisy town, and hurried up our preparations. My brother went off with the interpreter to make purchases of stores, and returned with mountains of fresh vegetables, and by mid-day we had succeeded in piling these, with the rest of our equipage, on to a string of weedy ponies, and sending them off for Lakkos, which is a village well up into the hills. After effecting this we retired for luncheon to a delightfully cool villa in the suburbs. Leaving civilisation—the last sign of which was the settlement of miserable lepers outside the walls—behind us, we followed our pack train on horseback. The way lay over the plain of Livadia, the natural fertility of which is increased by the rainfall induced by the mountains, which look down upon it from a height of eight thousand feet. Clouds covered the latter, but occasionally swept aside and allowed glimpses of their white tops, framed between the stems of grand old olive trees. For some miles the Government had constructed a cobble-stone road, which served to mark the way, but was in that state of repair which is usual

in the Turkish Empire, and all wayfarers travelled parallel with it on tracks through the fields.

Soon turning south up the valley of the Jardanos, we entered Alikianou, a district of orange groves, and, seeing a woman in one of them, I invaded her territory and returned laden with golden booty, for which she would take no payment. These oranges are as large as those of Jaffa, and have a splendid flavour. After this we forded the river, and then began a sharp ascent of the foot hills by a series of zigzags, and reached at sunset Lakkos, a large village scattered over the steep side of the ridge. Many of the houses are built against the hillside, so that it was difficult, in the gloaming, to tell whether one was walking on solid ground or the roof of a house. These flat-topped roofs, being flush with the footpath, which constitutes the main street of the village, are convenient conversation places upon which the villagers assemble. The rooms below open on to another roof, which covers the family flocks and herds.

Our tents were pitched on a little platform near the church, the only approach to a level place in the neighbourhood, but we took our meal in one of the houses hospitably offered for our use. During its consumption the whole available space, not occupied by the bed and the loom, was presently filled with an admiring circle of the notables of Lakkos, including the *Demarchos*, who dropped in *sans gêne*. Our communications, if unrestrained and cordial, were naturally restricted, but these hospitable folk did their best to make us feel at home. They showed not the slightest reserve in expressing their political opinions, which were of course vehemently anti-



LAKKOS.

Turkish. They were anxious to know if the English wanted their island, but were averse to annexation by anybody, even the Greeks.

The man whom we had engaged as cook and interpreter was occupied in cooking our dinner in the adjoining house. From the sounds of revelry which proceeded thence, we judged that he was enjoying himself. The individual whom the Consul had designed to fill these functions for us had had a revolver accident, and "Polly," whose full patronymic I will not further advertise, had been secured by us at the last moment at Athens. This gentleman proved to be over-fond of the excellent and potent wine of the country. We afterwards found that, being surrounded in his own department by a similar crowd of villagers to that which entertained us, his expansive soul warmed towards them, and he proceeded to distribute a great part of our stores gratuitously. At this period his utterance had become somewhat confused, and we gathered that his audience had formed the opinion that we were foreign emissaries bent on fomenting and subsidising a new revolution, a kind of assistance to which this same village has, it is believed, lent a willing ear in the past. We subsequently discovered that the baser sort were not averse to the process of selling to us their produce, and afterwards enjoying the benefit of a redistribution of the same, but the process was distinctly demoralising all round. I should be loth to tax Lakkiot peasants generally with laxity of morals. On the contrary, I conceived a great admiration for their manly independence—thanks to which, and their rocky fastness, they have ever withstood the foreigner, whether Turk or Venetian.

These people are a fine race, and distinct from any other Levantines I have seen, whether Greeks, Turks, or Syrians. The sandy beards which many of them wear, their fair complexions and stalwart figures, point to an origin in the north, rather than the south, of Europe; but, however that may be, it is doubtless due to the physical difficulties of the mountains where they dwell that they have maintained their race uncontaminated by baser blood. Two very favourable specimens, Stephano of Lakkos, and Vassilis of Selino, reputed to be the best hunters of the district, were engaged by us. They proved to be able mountaineers, but deficient in the science of venerie.

Lakkos had a stormy origin. In the year 1560, as now, the Cretans detested their rulers, and endeavoured to cast off the Venetian yoke. Francesco da Molini, a wealthy Venetian, and owner of a rich estate on the plain, sought to reach by stratagem the mountaineers, whom he could not overcome by fighting. He proposed a matrimonial alliance between his daughter and a member of the family of Kandanolis, the leader of the insurgents. A number of the latter were decoyed by the profuse hospitality offered, and, when overcome by the generous wine of Khaniá, were bound and hanged—all but four, who escaped to this buttress of the mountain, a natural stronghold overlooking the plain. Lakkos, which they founded, has at every opportunity been prominent in resisting the foreigner who tried to storm the mountain land. Reprisals have generally taken the form of burning the village, and Pashley records that his host had had his house destroyed three times for this reason. The descendant

of one of these pioneers,—himself, in his youth, a refugee from Turkish oppression, and now resident in London,—told me the above tradition, which he had from the elders of his village, and which is confirmed by one of the Harleian MS. in the British Museum.

Our night was rather a disturbed one, for, in the first place, the authorities had set guards over our tents—a most superfluous precaution. These soldiers crooned to themselves outside till we silenced them with forcible modern Greek oaths. Dogs were numerous, and whenever one barked, it started the cocks crowing, and that appeared to set off all the owls of the neighbourhood as well. In the morning we followed the ridge, from which we had a splendid view backwards over the red plain to the north. Then the ascent got steeper and rougher, and we mounted a succession of stony ravines. After five hours' ride we descended on to the curious upland plain of Omalos. This bears some resemblance to an extinct crater, though it is not of volcanic origin, but is formed by the gradual washing down of *débris* from the surrounding mountains into the hollow. It has no open-air outlet for accumulated water except a subterranean one. The plain, which is three miles long, has a gentle slope down to one end, where there is a *katavóthron*, or cave, into which flood-waters rush, to reappear many miles off. Though four thousand feet above the sea, the soil is very fertile, and is cultivated in the warm months. Hence there are some solidly-built stone huts, which shelter the summer visitants, and near to one of these we pitched our camp. It is reputed that this upland retreat is used as a convenient tryst for the mountaineers when concocting fresh schemes of revolt.

To the east of the plain lies the extremely rugged district of Sphakia. The "White Mountains" descend sharply from a height of eight thousand feet to the sea, hence this limestone area is scored by gullies of extraordinary depth and steepness.

As it was still early, we went to the other end of Omalos to examine the country before us. The triangular plain narrows to a little valley, which suddenly comes to an end at the edge of a tremendous ravine. Down this, the difficult pass of the *Xyloscalon*, or "wooden staircase," is carried, by a tortuous way, among ancient cypresses—gnarled and storm-warped. This gorge and others equally profound which fall into it, constitute a sanctuary in which the ibex, here alone in all Crete, maintain themselves. One of these ravines seemed to be not less than five thousand feet deep from the top of the flanking ridges to the stream, and the former could not have been more than two miles apart.

These ravines represent roughly a Υ , but the eastern arm is duplicated thus— Υ . They are encompassed by a range of cliffs, which I calculated to be not less than thirty miles in length, and perhaps, with their many folds, a great deal more; yet I do not think they are accessible from valley to ridge at more than a dozen points, even to a practised mountaineer.

Celestin and I climbed to a convenient spying point and soon had our telescopes out. In a few minutes I had the good fortune to get my glass on a small band of four goats, who were grazing at the foot of a cliff, three miles down the valley—all males. Three of them had the grey flanks and black shoulder-stripe distinctive of the older



ABOVE THE XYLOSCALON.

males of this species. Being distant, they were difficult to hold, among the scraggy fir-trees and cypress which project from these cliffs. Opposite to us was a mighty wall, which rose from the bottom of the gorge at our feet to a height of two thousand feet above us. On this we could hear stones intermittently tinkling down the rock, and Stefano assured us they were started by ibex on the feed. At length Celestin made out three of them, though, search as I would, I could not catch sight of them. Strange to say, Celestin could not "pick up" those which I had happened on with the glass, which illustrates the difficulty of finding them, even to a brilliant performer with the telescope as he is. It was too late for a stalk, as the ravine which lay between was too deep to cross before night. Two men from the huts had, rather to our annoyance, persisted in coming with us. They were armed with military breechloaders, a great number of which have been introduced into the island, but not for sport; such are the benevolent intentions of some of the Powers—it is needless to specify which. We tried to dissuade these gentlemen from disturbing the ground, but they appeared to be under the impression that, as we wanted ibex, they were furthering our wishes by trying to shoot some. When we returned to camp they pursued their way for some rocks, where they proposed to pass the night.

Although, contrary to expectation, our camp on Omalos was free from snow, it was exposed to an extremely cold north wind, and washing and tubbing in the open was a severe discipline. Under such circumstances we were tempted to ask, "Why wash?" After all, it is only a percentage of English and Americans who do this thing,

and they are accounted mad. Perhaps the majority are right; certainly the Cretans have no doubt on the subject. We resorted to the hut for warmth, and got it there. All our followers and several shepherds, not fewer than twenty in all, as well as a horse, were assembled in that low room. We made the most of our opportunity to get on terms with the people, but began to discover that Polly was a broken reed as an interpreter. Our inquiries were strangely metamorphosed, and no attempt was made, as we afterwards discovered, to convey to us our men's wishes. There were signs of discontent among them, for which we could not at the time discover the cause. While we sheltered in the huts, natives of another description took refuge from the cold in our tents. When I turned out the contents of my "sausage" bag—it is necessary to do this when seeking anything in that sort of luggage—I found that a toad of portentous size had *put on my pyjamas*.

The next morning the clouds lay so low that we made rather a late start. When we reached the edge of the ravine, we found our hunting acquaintances of the night before engaged with others in a drive, which did not improve our prospects of sport. These peasants do not seem to have ever practised any other method of hunting, for Pierre Belon, a traveller, who, in 1553, published *Les Observations de plusieurs Singularitez*, describes the method of hunting "le Bouc Sauvage en Crète." "Il y a des paysants sur la summité des haultes montaignes de Crète si bons tireurs de l'arc et principalement entour la montaigne de la Spachie et Madara, qu'ilz les navrent de leurs fleches de vingt et cinq pas de loing; et à ce faire

menent des femelles qu'ilz ont nourries et apprivoisées de jeunesse, et les lient à quelque passage en la montaigne, ou les masles ont accoustumé passer. Le tireur se tient à costé, caché derrière quelque buisson à l'opposite du vent, sachant bien que le Boucestain est de si grand sens d'odorer qu'il le sentirait de cent pas. Le masle trouvant la femelle en son chemin s'arreste, et lors le paysant lui tire de son arc." Our author proceeds to describe how a wounded buck, "qui est maistre à se médiciner," proceeds to eat the plant *dictamnus*, but in this he has evidently drawn from Pliny. I, therefore, quote this curious tradition from the fountain-head. He says: "Perceiving themselves shot with a shaft, they have recourse presently to that herb (dittany), and with eating thereof it is driven out again. Moreover, when they are stung with the phalangium, a kind of spider, they cure themselves with eating cray-fishes or fresh-water crabbes." The inhabitants of Crete are well aware at the present day of the healing virtues of dittany, and use it for wounds. Later on we fraternised with the native hunters from motives of policy, but with anger in our hearts. We could only hope that they would soon go home. They suggested, with the friendliest intentions, that, while they kept along the bottom of the ravine, we should climb to a higher level, and keep a bright look-out for whatever they might put up to us. We fell in with this plan, and a very steep clamber took us a thousand feet higher. While taking our luncheon among the fir-trees, three dim forms appeared through the stems scarcely eighty yards distant. L. dropped his sandwiches and seized his rifle, while I lay low, waiting for the shot; but these were only females, or young ones, and he

held his fire. We disposed ourselves in likely places and waited, but nothing else showed up. The passing snow showers made mysterious gloom in the depths below, and the icy flakes froze on to everything, so that the grand old gnarled trees to which they clung blossomed into a monstrous white inflorescence on every leaf and bearded tassel of moss.

We crossed the ridge on our return to camp, and in a secluded dell found the lovely blue *chionodoxa*—one more proof that Crete is but a continuation of the Taurus range of Asia Minor, where this bulb is common.

After another day with much the same experiences of weather, we decided that it would be well to try and find a camp farther away from the attentions of our Lakkos friends, and more in the heart of the ibex country. My brother and I, therefore, determined to explore the ravine and look out for a more central camp. The Xyloscalon proved, as our natives had told us, a *κακὸς δρόμος*, though it has been recently improved. The descent is at least three thousand feet to the tiny village of Samaria, which lies in the depths of the ravine. This singularly retired corner of the world has frequently served as a refuge for insurgents when hard pressed by Turkish forces. From above, the only practicable approach is by the difficult mountain track which we had descended. Below the village, for several miles, the ravine so contracts that there is no path except the boulder-strewn bed of the stream, from which the walls of rock rise vertically for many hundreds of feet. Naturally the poor refugees have sometimes been caught here as in a trap, blocked in by snow on the tops of the mountains, and by soldiers at the sea

entrance of the ravine. Halfway down to the village was a little solitary chapel called Haghios Nicolaus, close to a running stream, and surrounded by the finest group of old cypresses of the spreading kind which I ever saw. The sacred character of the spot has no doubt preserved them from the axe. This we pitched upon as the best place for a camp, and the wide branches would serve as an excellent substitute for tents, which there might be some difficulty in transporting down the pass.

By this time Polly's peccadilloes had made him impossible, so we dismissed him, and sent him back to Khaniá without more ado. He delivered a parting shot by sending off one of our horses, and ordering at Lakkos an immense quantity of provisions which we did not require. We were relieved when the rascal had gone, but thenceforth we had to do without a cook or interpreter.

We had, however, among our followers some from Khaniá, who were more or less polyglot; an Egyptian named Rumali, which sounds as if it came out of a playbill of the "Savoy." This gentleman spent his odd moments rolling cigarettes, which he stuck behind his ears, so that he always had one ready for a friend. Ismail, our Nubian muleteer, like most of his race, was highly intelligent; but he frightened the children at Samaria, who had never seen a black man, which shows how isolated the inhabitants of that village are, even from Khaniá, which contains hundreds. These two had some words of French and Italian, and we ourselves plunged recklessly into modern Greek, undeterred by the discouraging fact that our hunter *Βασιλεύς* pronounces his name Vassilis.

We managed, in spite of the difficulty of the Xyloscalon,

to bring down all necessities to Haghios Nicolaus. The church is a tiny building, scarcely ten feet long, and boasts for its only decoration two old china plates of the blue willow pattern, which had been let into the plaster of the wall. We bathed in the bright little stream which dashes along its rocky bed, after rising, full bodied, near this point. Each chose for his bedroom some grassy hollow among the rocks, well sheltered by the spreading Cypress branches, out of which little night birds hooted little questions at us, not untunefully.

A little green col, twenty minutes from camp, is a good spying point for the wild ravine, which here descends into the main valley, and especially for the cliffs, at the base of which I had seen the small herd of ibex rams on the first evening. Being now much closer to it, I felt confident of finding them again, and in the morning Celestin soon had his glass on them—doubtless the same lot—feeding on the slope of loose stones below the steepest part. There were five of them, all old males except one, who had not attained the mature distinction of the shoulder stripe.

I sent Stephano back for my brother, who had remained in camp, and together we watched them through the glass, hoping that they would settle where they were; but this is not their way. The *ἀγρίμια* always retire in the day to the cliff, and generally place themselves where they are absolutely unapproachable from below, and cannot be reached, or even seen, from above.

It was pretty to watch their movements when they had reached such a break-neck place. One would stretch himself up on his hind-legs against a perpendicular rock



NEAR HAGHIOS NICHOLAUS.

for some green morsel, like a man reaching for a flower. I saw one fail in his upward leap, and fall backward as a cat may do in jumping at a wall, but, like the cat, he twisted in the air and alighted again, rigid, and with a perfect balance, on the tiny ledge from which he had sprung. Two of them, finding a little platform, which seemed to me inadequate for the purpose, had a sparring match; each one, rearing up on his hind legs, tried to knock his adversary off by throwing his whole weight on to him. When they were tired of this game—for it appeared to be only light-hearted play—they left the arena, which was immediately occupied by two others, who went through the same pantomime. I was on the look-out, but without success, to verify Pliny's description, who says: "The wild goat, called the Eveck, wonderful swift, albeit his head be laden with huge horns like two sword scabbards; by these they hang and poise themselves from rocks, namely, when they mind to leape from one to another, for by swinging to and fro, they . . . fetch a jerke out to what place they list, as it were forth of an engine."¹

When we thought they had settled, Celestin and I proceeded to try the stalk, though I did not like the look of it, for these cliffs are composed of very friable limestone. Getting down into the watercourse, we followed it upwards for several hundred yards. The goats, being far above us, commanded it at several critical points, but by crawling round rocks we reached the foot of the cliff, apparently without having been observed by them, and then crept along its base to the only place where it seemed

¹ Pliny's *Natural History*, translated by Philemon Holland.

accessible. A stiff climb, with some awkward steps, took us to the top of a buttress, which we thought commanded their stronghold. We were indeed far too near it, for the wind was blowing hard over the summit of the mountain, and, as sportsmen know, under these circumstances the air always batters about on the lee side. The goats were invisible, and I felt sure that they had had a warning whiff. As a matter of fact, my brother, who remained below, and had his glass on them, saw them move off just before we reached the buttress, but this I did not learn till the evening. We faced a small gully, and I hoped against hope that they had only withdrawn round the corner, and would reappear when hunger prompted them. The best chance, or rather the only one, was to remain where we were. I will not describe the weary watch, for we stayed on these very hard rocks for seven hours—in fact, till well past the goat's supper hour—but never saw them again that night. They were doubtless chuckling a thousand feet higher.

The same day L. descended the valley as far as its junction with its major eastern branch, and explored the latter, using the telescope from various prominent heights. As the day wore on, Vassilis apparently came to the conclusion that this was a futile method, and offered to show sport in his own way. Throwing his coat, not a very savoury garment by the way, to his employer, and enjoining him to remain where he was, he started, without waiting for explanations, up the cliff, his countenance wreathed in mysterious smiles, and "larding the lean earth" as he climbed. After a time he was seen to reach an eminence far above the sportsman, and lighted a bonfire there; then,

bounding off with an agility previously unsuspected in a man of fifteen stone, repeated the operation on another peak. When at length he returned, hot but beaming, it appeared that he thought that this would have the effect of driving the *agrimia* into the open. I mention this incident, not at all to the disparagement of this mountaineer—I will not call him hunter—but as showing the willing good-nature with which he and his fellows endeavoured to serve us.

Another day we had the luck to spy a crafty old ram crossing the cliff, and marked him down to his retreat under a tree which sprang from its face. The spot was unattainable by mortal man, but we thought it possible that, by sending our men round and above him, they might dislodge him with stones and outcry. Such was the nature of the cliff that he could not traverse it, and if his escape upwards were blocked, he would have no alternative but to descend to its foot, at least so it seemed. I do not care for driving myself, but, coupled with the fact that the high wind from the north rendered stalking unavailing, it seemed the only chance.

Carefully surveying our position from the opposite side of the valley, we chose our posts, and reached them with some climbing. Mine I took to be a certainty if the ibex should elect to turn to the right. At least I could see no other practicable course for him. I made myself as secure and comfortable as I could on a little shelf. Nothing happened for four hours or more. Then, out of the stillness, a sudden rush of a heavy body, with sonorous pulsations through the air, made me crouch against the wall. For a moment I took it to be an eagle or läm-

mergeier, but the loud crash which followed showed it to be a large stone. Others succeeded it, and it was all the more trying to the nerves that I could not hear them coming, till a whiz close by announced their presence. I then observed from the blazes and bruises on the rocks that I was close to the tail of a couloir, down which bounded every rock dislodged on the face of the cliff. I knew that these were messengers dispatched, either intentionally or otherwise, by our friends two thousand feet above, but it was evident that their missiles all took the same course, and that ten yards on either side of the track I was safe. That was all that happened. The seasoned campaigner whom we were endeavouring to dislodge, either knew of some back exit, or remained in his castle until our men had passed him. That was our last attempt to secure a goat. One night, the member of our trio who had the most moral courage announced that he was not going to break his heart, and possibly his head, any longer on these impracticable cliffs, and the others admitted that they also were *rock sick*, a phase or mood which at times overcomes even the most stalwart climber.

From our sheltered camp we explored the wonderful gorge below Samaria, which carries off the whole water drainage of the district. Its sheer walls are clothed with verdure from top to bottom, owing to the moisture of this narrow chasm, which never sees the sun. From these depths we climbed again to our first camp on Omalos. Some trifles of ours were stolen there, not, I feel sure, by our own people; but Celestin, who had lost a favourite pair of razors, was less tolerant. He declared the whole pack of islanders to be "brigands," but, when his anger softened, he



A FAMILY PARTY AT SAMARIA.

admitted our own special followers to the comparative term of endearment of "notres voleurs." As I write I fear the island is again stained with crimes which are worse than these. Thus it has ever been. It lies a tempting prize in the fair way of nations. The strongest seizes it, and holds his conquest by force, fear, and fraud; but revenge, if dormant, is never dead, and only awaits opportunity. Plenty is its heritage, but not peace.

VI

DAGHESTAN

THE great barrier of the Caucasus which divides Europe from Asia, and, as if to shut off all intercourse, extends without break from sea to sea, has fired the imaginations of men ever since travellers' tales began to be recorded. What are the attractions which exercise this powerful influence? To the mountaineer it is well known that the peaks to the west of the Dariel Pass are the highest in Europe. Their splendours have been made known by many Alpine climbers, and especially in Mr. Freshfield's sumptuous volumes. To those who delight to unearth communities of strange people, the whole range is a living ethnological museum. It is enough to remark that countless waves of invaders have broken and dispersed against these walls. Fragments of Eastern hordes have clung to the valleys, preserving their separate traditions and language, and differing almost as much from one another as they do from the rest of the world. The very animals, or at least some of them, are distinct from those found elsewhere. The most notable of these is the *Aurochs*, or Bison, the sole European representative of that shaggy race, now

confined to two very small areas in Lithuania and the Kuban.¹ The next in order of distinction is the great Red Stag, which attains to about three times the size of its Scotch congener. In addition to the above there are three distinct species of wild goat, each occupying its own territory.

In common with most men who are blest or cursed with the wandering spirit, I had for many years desired to explore this range, which, in the character of its inhabitants, and the nature of its animals, seems more akin to Asia than to Europe, and it was in fulfilment of this aspiration that I travelled eastwards in the autumn of 1897.

I had foreseen obstacles, and others were prophesied. For instance, I was informed on high authority that some of the districts which I had designed to visit were "dangerous on account of snow and malefactors." Relying on the experience of those who know the country best, both Russians and English, I think I may say at once that these official fears have no foundation. Snow there is of course. It generally accompanies mountains over ten thousand feet high, and autumn storms must be endured, but malefactors are no commoner than in any other pastoral country.

However, as a sort of pledge of my circumspection, and for selfish reasons of my own, I took my daughter T. with me. My cousin, Mr. F. G. Barclay, also accompanied me. My old companion Celestin was detained at home,

¹ The Kuban habitat of these animals is now comprised in the hunting reserve of the Grand Duke Sergius. The Lithuanian Forest is the private *chasse* of the Emperor.

but another Gavarnie man, Barthelmie, took his place, in the position of hunter and servant.

For the benefit of others who may follow in our steps I will mention the difficulties which we found most real, so that, being warned, they may avoid the rocks upon which we suffered shipwreck. The first might easily have been avoided. It was excess of luggage. This mistake was manifest as soon as we arrived at Novorossisk on the Black Sea. The painful process of shedding it had to be commenced there, and continued still more drastically later on. Ultimately we succeeded in reducing it to about two horse-loads for each member of our party. That is to say, a little over 300 pounds. If tents and some provisions are carried I do not think it possible to go much below that limit, with any regard to comfort. To increase it is to risk detention for want of horses. Another difficulty is to procure an interpreter who can talk Georgian, Tartar, and the several languages spoken in these mountains, as well as Russian. It is rather strange, considering the number of travellers who now visit the Caucasus, and other countries beyond, that a race of "dragomans," combining with these linguistic attainments, the ability to deal with the ordinary vicissitudes of travel in remote places, has not arisen. They are, to say the least, very scarce. Such a genius had, it is true, been promised us, but at Odessa I learned that he was somewhere in Central Asia. I had been advised not to burden myself with a Tiflis interpreter, yet I was driven to do this very thing; and, in response to my telegram, a little old gentleman, with the courier manner, joined us the day after our arrival at Novorossisk.

This treasure, who is a Mingrelian by birth, and spoke French, had travelled north, south, east, and west, and talked every language. He was to cook, cater, buy, or hire all that we required. "C'est son métier," I was assured. How far he fulfilled these requirements will appear in the course of this narrative.

Every one remembers Sir John Maundeville's marvellous description of Abkhasia — the densely - forested slope which overhangs the Black Sea, near Sukhum Kale. "In that kingdom of Abcaz is a great marvaylle. For a provynce of that contree that men klepen Hanyson is alle covered with derknesse, withouten ony brightnesse or light ; so that no man may see ne here, ne no man dar entren in to hem. And natheles thei of the contree seyn that som tyme men heren voys of folk, and hors nyzenge, and cokkes crowynge," and a great deal more to the same effect. It was at the back of this mysterious country, among the upper valleys of the Kuban River, a favourite habitat of the *Olen*; or stag, and the Caucasian goat, that we had designed at first to try our luck by making a camp. Now, whether the paternal nervousness on our behalf, to which I have already referred, was communicated to the local authorities, or whether their action was inspired by anxiety lest we should poach in the Grand Ducal preserves, which are situated in these parts, I do not know, but the Ataman, or military commandant, of Batalpashinsk, refused us permission to enter the Teberda Valley, along which there is a tolerable road leading to the Klukhor Pass. He asserted that though the country was perfectly safe he could not allow us to pass without superior authority. This authority I had sought for, both from

St. Petersburg and Tiflis, but it failed to arrive until after we had left the country. I have since been informed by Russians occupying high positions that it was unnecessary to ask for permission at all.

The next string to my bow was to approach the central chain at Chegem, or Bezingi. Here Mr. Freshfield's beautiful illustrations had led us to expect the finest scenery in Europe; but alas for such hopes! The English Consul prophesied that we should encounter the same *non possumus* at Naltchik, through which town we must pass. Possibly we might have got through, but my time being limited, I could not afford to spend it in evading, or unravelling, this network of red tape.

Now, while we were waiting for a telegraphic reply to our despairing appeals, we had been considering other alternatives. Daghestan, as that portion of the Caucasian range is called which lies to the east of the Dariel Pass, and between it and the Caspian Sea, has the merit of a good autumn climate, and of being less known to Englishmen than either of the other lines of march. We had reason to believe that some one had said a kind word on our behalf to the Governor, Prince Bariatinsky, in case we should pass that way, and this good prince was reported to us as a benevolent Saint Hubert who takes an interest in sportsmen. To this shrine, then, we pilgrims repaired, after telegraphing that we were coming.

The railway from the Black Sea at Novorossisk to the Caspian at Petrovsk lies along the plain on the northern side of the chain. The journey takes thirty hours, and when, as in our case, the mountains are hidden, it is dreary to desolation. The only features are the arabas or country carts,



A WALNUT GROVE.

at this season fetching hay, and visible at a great distance, as they trot along over the level prairie, each cart surmounted by a black pyramid, which, on closer inspection, proves to be a native, half hidden under his *bourka*, the universal cloak of the country. Once only, near Vladikavkas, the glorious evening vision of the pale cone of Kazbek, fourteen thousand feet above us, was revealed.

One incident disturbed our peace. We had to change trains in the middle of the night at Tichoretzkaia. We instructed the "Treasure" to warn us of the arrival of the eastward train, which he neglected to do. When we discovered it there was barely time to get in. Barthelmie was still engaged in handing up our things when the train moved, and, though he made a dash for the steps, he was seized by a burly official. His unhappy case, left alone at midnight in the middle of Russia without a word of Russian, may be imagined. Our consternation roused a gorgeous Mingrelian Prince who was asleep on one of the couches in the saloon. This good-natured giant shook himself, got up, and offered his services. A few authoritative words were uttered and a telegram sent off from the next station. We were assured that we might rest in peace, that our poor derelict Frenchman would catch us up by a quicker train the next day, and it turned out so.

Although the country seemed so barren, fruit was extremely abundant. Each station had its fruit stall, where good grapes, apples, and melons could be bought. Pheasants also were sold on the platforms at about 2s. the brace. This is the original home of our English bird, but I saw no trace of the ring which has been bred in from later importations.

On the second morning after leaving Novorossisk we were greeted by the salt smell of the Caspian, and at dawn rolled into Petrovsk. Here we were received on the platform by the Governor's *aide-de-camp* and by a native grandee, Aselder Casanlipoff, who is attached to his staff. These two gentlemen had driven down in the night from Temir-Shan-Shura, where the Governor lives—a practical guarantee of his kind intentions towards us.

Petrovsk is not interesting. Its chief features are the innumerable trains of oil tanks, enough to warm and light the Empire; also shoals of sturgeon and herrings, which are artificially frozen, and, in that state, distributed through Russia. The many double-humped camels, and unmistakable Kalmuk faces, to be seen at Petrovsk reminded us that Asia and Europe meet on the shores of the Caspian.

Here we spent a day, mostly occupied in making further sacrifices of luxuries. The unknown lay before us, and we could not afford to sink under the weight of our impedimenta. It appeared that the good Governor had arranged a special *chasse* for our benefit, and would meet us on the following day at the appointed spot. There was a forest there, and deer were said to frequent it. We were even told how many, "Il y a neuf pièces qui vous attendent." This was not the sort of news we expected, but of course we could only accept the rôle of favoured guests at a court function. Sending our luggage straight to Shura, about twenty miles off, we started with our two friends in two carriages. Each vehicle had four horses abreast, which were kept at a smart canter along the rough road, till we entered the hills. In three hours we reached a barren valley, with a single bungalow and some oil wells.



THREE GENERATIONS.

Several carriages were there, as well as innumerable horses, and a considerable guard of Cossacks. The Governor had already arrived—a fine soldier of the old school. The introduction was a formidable ceremony, for his staff consisted of about thirty, mostly notables of the country, many of whom enter the Russian army. About half wore the ordinary Russian uniform—the rest the Circassian national dress, with the finely-mounted *Kinjal* or long dagger, the silver cartridge-cases on the breast, and the tall *papach* or cylindrical cap of black or white lamb-skin. The fathers of many of these men had fought with Shamyl against the Russians. One fine old gentleman, who seemed to be a very popular character, was a relative of Shamyl's, and had himself fought by his side. It is part of the settled policy of Russia to incorporate in the nation the races she conquers, chiefly by passing the cream of the population through her army. The people of Daghestan made one of the pluckiest fights for independence recorded in history. Yet they seem to have accepted their lot with resignation—one might even say with contentment. The Russians may certainly be said to have pacified, as well as conquered, the country. Road-making, and a happy knack of granting enough, but not too much, self-government seems to be the secret of it.

We were at once conducted to a sort of pavilion, constructed, for the occasion, of birch stems and rushes. Here, at a side-table, we began with the inevitable *Zakouska*, consisting of caviare, and other appetisers, washed down with a good round bumper of vodka. We learned for the first time the blessed words, "Vasje Darovya," "Your good health." How it rings in my ears

still! Then we sat down to an elaborate *déjeuner*, accompanied throughout by continuous toasting, with much noise and acclamation.

But what of the *chasse*? Till one o'clock there were no signs of it. Then the Governor rose; horses were brought round, and all mounted. T. would not be left behind. Our saddles had been sent straight to Shura, and the Tcherkess saddle, with its high peak in front and behind, does not lend itself to the sideways position. For a short distance she tried it, but necessity compels. In this country the women use the same saddle and the same position as the men, and she simply adopted the national custom, which excited no remark.

It was the first time that the *chasse* had been honoured by the presence of a lady. The little band of cavaliers who attended upon her showed their appreciation of the compliment, and carried on a conversation which if limited was at least brisk. These Lesghians and Circassians are fine horsemen. Indeed in Daghestan no one who respects himself willingly goes on foot, but then the horses can climb almost as well as a reasonably active man. On this occasion it was a tolerably steep staircase that we surmounted. An hour's climb up a stony ridge took us to the top, which commanded a fine view of the Caspian. A forest of stunted trees which covered the slope below us was to be the scene of the drive. A number of Cossack soldiers, who were to act as beaters, had been sent on to the bottom of the mountain, and, at a signal, began to drive it upwards towards the guns, who ranged themselves, as they pleased, along the ridge.

It did not seem likely that the game, whatever it was,

would break in that direction. There were too many people and too much shouting. After I had been sitting about twenty minutes I discovered that another sportsman was concealed exactly in front of me. This caused me some anxiety lest he should shoot me, but no pangs of jealousy, for it made no difference.

When the beaters at length came up panting we learnt that a boar had been killed by one of them far below. The cavalcade returned by another way, riding through dense brushwood, from which the Cossacks plucked branches covered with a delicious fruit like a small cherry.

Back at the bungalow, turkeys and other tempting meats were roasting over fires in the open air, a foretaste of what was to come. Till they were ready the time was occupied in shooting at a mark, and a successful fluke of mine was received with shouts of "bravo."

Then dinner, and what a dinner! we were all comrades at once. There is a full heartedness about the laugh of a Russian which is contagious. At the Governor's end of the table we were quite sedate, as befitted the grisled warriors who surrounded him. Lower down the board the fun waxed fast and furious. F. was in the midst of it, and his neighbours were evidently bent on trying what sort of a cargo an Englishman could carry. The toasting began with the soup, and never stopped. The names of the principal guests were shouted out in succession and received with acclamation, many coming round to clink glasses in an excess of bonhomie. The Russian taste runs to variety in liquor. Champagne, the wine of Kakhetia, liqueurs, and even London stout, followed one another in rapid succession. If my recollection is not dimmed by the circum-

stances I responded to my health, or my daughter's, at least five times in purest Parisian French. A fragment has been preserved :

“Votre Excellence et messieurs les officiers de l'Armée Russe. Permettez-moi de vous adresser comme camarades, parceque nous avons chassés ensemble les gibiers féroces de votre pays sauvage. Avec vous nous avons bus la champagne de la France pour nous rendre gaies, le vodka de la Russie qui donne la courage, et la bierre de Barclay Perkins qui est la gloire de mon pays. Nous les avons bien mêlés. Voilà la gage de l'amitié des Peuples. Vasdarovya mes amis.” These beautiful sentiments were tremendously applauded, but as very few understood French I doubt if their fine flavour was appreciated.

There was dancing too, and Tartar music and some good singing, as well as some which was not good. The dancing was generally a *pas seul*. One after another stepped into the cleared space which was lighted by a large lantern, and executed a sort of solitary highland fling, or double shuffle, to which the outside audience beat time by clapping their hands. Now and again a dancer, by way of giving emphasis to the measure, fired the six barrels of his revolver into the ground at his feet. It was not till eleven o'clock—we had sat down at six—that the Governor rose and presently entered his carriage to return to Shura. His mounted Cossack guard preceded him carrying lighted torches—a pretty sight. He had reached the rendezvous in the grey of the morning and told me that he always travelled by night and did his work in the early morning.

My daughter had retired long before, and I also now took refuge in the Bungalow, but the other guests were



THE BEATERS

not tired, and sounds of revelry continued for some hours longer. Indeed there was no place where they could go to bed. I have described this episode because it is characteristic. I need not say that we were eager for a wider sphere.

In the morning we followed his Excellency and were received by him at the gate of his palace at the pretty town of Temir-Shan-Shura, with that simple good nature which we had already learned to expect from Russians occupying high positions. Here we abode in luxury for one night. There was no need for a longer delay, for our journey had been well thought out. Our host traced on the map his suggestions for our trip, through the heart of the mountain chain over which his mild rule extends. We purposed to traverse it from north-east to south-west by a route not previously followed by any Englishman. We were assured that the people were well disposed and that the Naibs—native chiefs of districts—through whose domains we should pass would look after us. Nothing was forgotten which would contribute to the ease of our journey, and especially the comfort of the lady. The information about sport was vague. That we must ferret out for ourselves, but a sixteen-point stag's head, and a tûr of exceptional dimensions, which hung in the dining-room, were proof that these creatures existed somewhere up there.

On parting with our kind host we drove for the first two days by the military road to Karadagh. This took us at first over rolling down, then by a series of passes about five thousand feet high, which crossed monotonous barren ridges. The first night we failed to reach the stopping place intended, and groped about the village of Levachi in the dark, till we found a Russian official who made us free

of his house and supper. As if this welcome was not sufficient he pressed upon me an ancient bow and arrows of the country, and a steel cap with the pendant chain curtain characteristic of Crusaders, and, more recently, of Shamyl's warriors. As fire-arms have not been very long introduced into Daghestan, the bow may have been in use during the same period. It is of remarkable construction—the wooden arc being strengthened with a backing of horn of the wild goat, and the cord was pulled *backwards*, reversing the normal curve. This was the first evidence I had received of the existence of the wild goat (*C. ægagrus*) in the mountains of Daghestan, and it was confirmed by a skin of the animal, which lay on the floor. The gift was embarrassing, but our worthy entertainer would take no denial. The question of what return to offer for such courtesies is a difficult one, as the status of the host cannot always be ascertained. Some presents of value should be taken to meet cases like the above, but the unofficial villager, whose hospitality is not less spontaneous, is generally unaffectedly glad of a gift of money.

We now found ourselves among Lesghian villages which are probably exactly the same as they have been for thousands of years. Where there is much water they are surrounded by gardens of fruit-trees, which offer a refreshing contrast to the surrounding brown desolation. The houses are flat roofed, with a projecting lower story, generally supporting a wide verandah, and covering the stables or cow byre. On each roof a stone roller is seen—used, as in Asia Minor, to compress and flatten the earth which forms its surface. The country being universally steep, these platforms are put to many uses. They are the



NATIVE CURIOSITY.

constant resort of the women and children. The former line the edge when travellers are passing, for, though Mahommedans, they know no shame in being looked upon by strangers. The wonder is that the babies, who toddle, unprotected, on the brink, never tumble off. Most of these Lesghians are a pure breed. The men are generally tall and slim, with finely-cut features. Their complexions are nearly as fair as those of Englishmen. They are probably derived from a Persian or Iranian stock. There is a second type, which abounds in some villages more than others—short thick-set people with broad faces and high-cheek bones—sprung presumably from Tartar or Mongolian progenitors. These types will be readily distinguished in the illustrations facing pages 180, 188, and 214. One would judge, from the fixity of these characteristics, that the strength of their passes had kept these mountaineers free from invasion for many a century, before the arrival of the Russians. Besides there is hardly any cultivable ground to tempt an invader to stay. The wealth of the land lies in flocks and herds, for there is a great extent of mountain pasture, which is generally common property. Their language is Avar, which has a considerable Arab base. The men, in common with all pastoral people in the Caucasus, wear a *bourka*, or round cloak of skin or white felt, in all weathers, and a rough kind of *papach*, which has the appearance of an abnormally shaggy head of hair. This heavy head-gear is probably adopted as a protection from the sun. It has the effect of forcing their ears to project at right angles to their heads, which has an odd appearance when they remove those caps. The herdsmen among them carry a pair of heavy *crampons* at their belt.

A queer custom with some of the older men is to dye their beards a bright brick red. It cannot be meant, as with us, to deceive. The colour is too crude, and besides the top of the head is left the natural colour. The women wear plain ear-rings of silver quite three inches in diameter. In some villages these are pendant. In others fashion, or perhaps convenience, prescribes their being folded upwards and fastened to the top of the head. They also carry a sort of breastplate covered with silver coins, which they are fond of displaying. Thus they wear their fortune, not in their faces, but on their bosoms, and it behoves a cautious suitor to look well before he leaps. It struck me as rather a convenient custom. It was pathetic to notice that the poorer ones, *faute de mieux*, sew on buttons to simulate a wealth which they do not possess. In some of the houses we noticed old brazen utensils of the shapes which we are accustomed to associate with Persian art. One used for washing is particularly graceful, but not very satisfying for the purpose. A thin stream of water is poured through an attenuated spout over the hands, into a wide dish, and escapes through a perforated lid into a well beneath. Although we occasionally saw old arms and chain helmets in the houses, the peasants are not allowed to carry modern guns unless in the service of the Government, but all wear the *Kinjal*, which is used for all sorts of purposes, and especially the chopping of wood.

Later on, in a remote village, I obtained a massive bronze bowl two feet in diameter, of beautiful style and finely worked. The rim is expanded into four wings, engraved with a Kufic inscription. The handles are supported by lions. Mr. Budge, of the British Museum,



GUIRGISKI BRIDGE.

attributes it to the fourteenth century, and its probable origin to Mesopotamia. It is unlikely that such high art ever flourished in these mountains. It was an awkward object to carry about on horseback, but the prize was worth the trouble. Outside some of the villages stones are set up, inscribed in ancient Arabic character, which probably commemorate local saints.

On the second day we passed near the wonderful mountain of Gunib, a natural fortress, seven thousand feet above the sea, where Shamyl made his last stand, and where he finally submitted to General Bariatsky, uncle of the present Governor, nearly forty years ago. The strong bastions guarding the Guirgiski Bridge, which here spans the ravine of the Kara Koisu, commands an important strategical position, and are perhaps a measure of the trouble the Russians experienced in subduing that sturdy ruffian and patriot.

At Karadagh, reached that night, we made the acquaintance of our future host and conductor, the Naib, Mourtu Zali, a tall and comely man of forty-seven, with the manners of a courtier, and the simple directness of a mountaineer—in truth a fine specimen of his race. He has large possessions, and is much trusted by the Government—is indeed a little king in these parts. We were soon on good terms, to which the efforts of my companions to talk Russian contributed not a little. The vodka was good and the little room resounded with our feeble jokes, to which the Naib responded with guttural laughter. The conversation soon turned to hunting. His one idea was to drive the game. We tried to explain that we preferred to seek it ourselves. He said, “ But you would have to climb

the mountains. That is impossible. Even I who belong to this country cannot do it." At last he advised us to go to "bye-bye." As he knew no languages but Avar and Russian, it struck us as odd to meet with the expression here.

We had now seen the last of wheeled vehicles, and took to our saddles. The process of hiring horses, trying them, and arranging loads, was a lengthy one, and we were badly cheated in the process, for the first and last time, as I believe, while we remained in Daghestan. We were made to take a ridiculous number, and to pay three roubles per horse per day, but Mourtu Zali quashed the bargain as soon as he heard of it, and thenceforth we only paid one rouble per horse for a diminished number.

At last we had got our baggagers off, and, after breakfast, gaily galloped after them.

Here I had better indicate the nature of the range, and the route by which we were to traverse it. The whole of Daghestan is mountainous. The range is about ninety miles wide from north to south, but the watershed closely overhangs the southern plain. None of the higher summits are situated actually upon it. They are all on the big buttresses which stretch, from it, to the north. The valleys between the latter are therefore deep, and carry away the whole of the glacier meltings, in four or five considerable streams, which flow to the north. We were to follow the ravine formed by one of the largest of these rivers, the *Avarskoe Koisu*, to its sources. The moisture distilled from the southern plain is precipitated on and about the crest of the range, which for this reason is covered with forest, while the northern portion is almost bare.



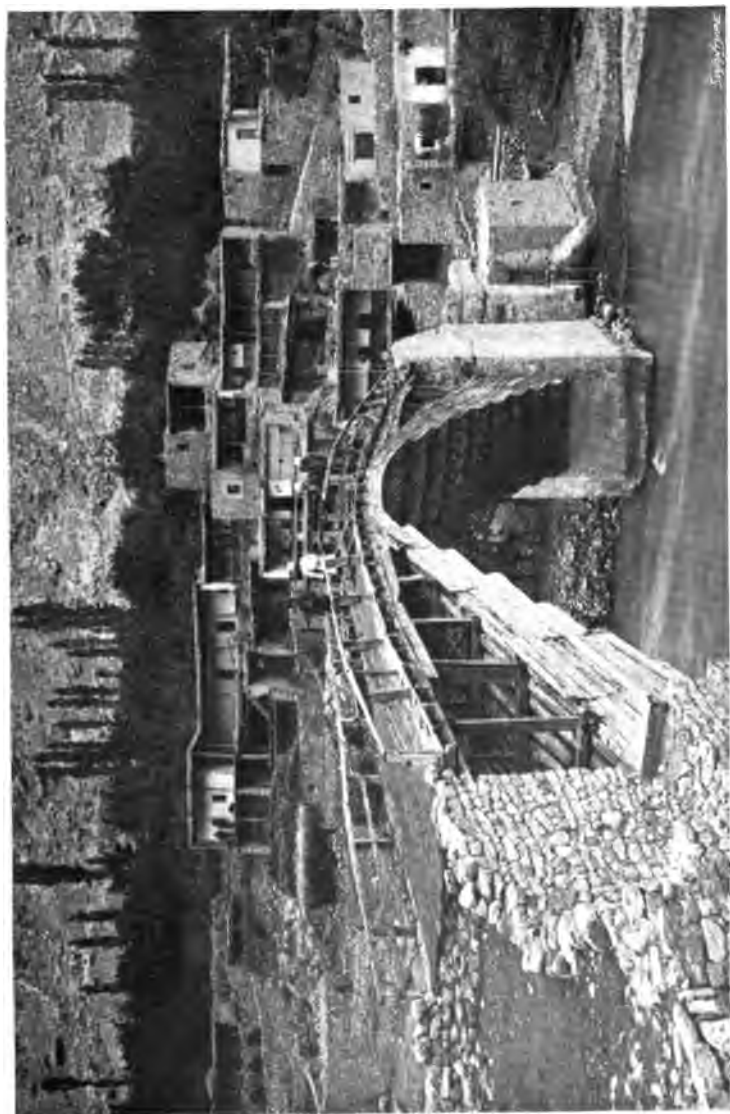
LESGHIAN.

The ravine which we followed has always been the channel for an important trade route, the primitive engineering of which is interesting, if somewhat trying to the nerves. In many places the track is carried across the face of cliffs, supported on rough beams; in others a sort of causeway, or groove, has been laboriously scooped out of the living rock, long before gunpowder was invented. In such galleries it is necessary to keep a sharp look-out ahead to avoid the upper projection of rock, which is often so low that one must bend to the horse's neck to avoid it. The Russians are slowly improving this route, and in course of time there will perhaps be a direct carriageable way throughout, as far as Tiflis. They have even thrown iron bridges over the stream at some points, and this one regrets, as the old steep timber bridges, built on the cantilever principle, are highly picturesque. The road is already pretty good as far as the green village of Golok. Here we found that our muleteers had stopped, nominally for the hour of prayer. As it was obviously hopeless to get much farther that night we made a virtue of necessity, and, entering a verandah, feasted on grapes for the space of two hours. Some of the villagers carried tame hawks on their wrists, doubtless used for hawking, a pursuit of which they are fond. In the room behind us there was a fine head of an *Ægagrus* goat, a further proof of the existence of this animal in the range. Ten versts farther the one-roomed house of an engineer offered solid shelter from the rain which had begun to fall, and we determined to stop the night, pitching our tents on the platform outside. When travelling with pack-horses it is generally wisest to halt while it rains, if any shelter is available. It is

impossible in wet weather to keep a horseman dry, or the luggage free from mud. In the struggle to reduce our luggage I had had to discard our largest and best tent, and to take for my own use a little "Alpine," which I now found, to my disgust, was too much worn to keep the water out.

This was the first place where we were thrown upon the resources of the "Treasure," and we soon began to discover his deficiencies. He stood in the midst of our luggage with drooping arms and a vacant expression, meddling with a dozen things but doing nothing. It was useless to remind him of the abundance of provisions in the boxes. He was totally unable to produce a passable dinner. In reply to my anxious enquiry he said, "Il y a de la soupe" (that involved putting some tablets in hot water) "et puis il y a du beurre." If it had not been for brisk little Barthelmie, and the active Cossacks who accompanied Mourtu Zali, we should have starved in the midst of plenty. A young goat was sacrificed, and *shishliks*,—that is, toothsome lumps of meat skewered on a stick, and toasted over a wood fire, of which they carry the taste,—were promptly smoking before us. When we had to pack up and go our henchman reached still lower depths of despondency. Dirty coverings got mixed up with remains of food, while plates, dishes, and saucepans were put away unwashed. Indeed washing of all kinds he regarded as an empty form, and never once did he remember to bring us the water we required morning and evening.

Some time in the course of the next morning we encountered another friend. This was the Naib, Hadji Jaffar, who was waiting for us on the track, with his squad



ГОЛОК.

of Cossacks, without whom no Naib who respects himself seems to take the road. They are his police and are equipped by him, but the Government find their arms, very rough military breechloaders. Each Naib rules over a territory comprising ten to twenty villages. He deals at his own discretion with all minor crimes, but reports everything to his superiors. Serious crimes are lightly punished—murder, for instance, being expiated by banishment and compensation to relatives. This plan is designed to kill down the practice of vendetta.

It was evident that we were to be received with honour wherever we went. We even had a band. One of the horsemen carried a sort of drum, another a pipe, which produced raucous notes, like Highland bagpipes with a leak. At a convenient point, where the track was wide, they drew up, and had a dance for our diversion. Not content with the ordinary steps, some threw somersaults, and others walked about on their hands, which was a funny thing to set soldiers to do, but Jaffar gave us much more substantial entertainment than this. For the next few days, in fact as long as we remained in his district, it was one delirious round of feasting, and we toasted one another in season, and out of season. Our precious tinned meats, which had cost us so much trouble, and 100 per cent of duty, remained in their boxes, for Jaffar insisted on treating us as his guests, and we were not allowed to pay for anything except our horses. The Naib's portly figure shook with pleasure and his red face glowed, over his vodka; yet he was a devout Mussulman, and had earned the title of Hadji at the shrine of Mecca. He once excused himself to us for these liberties with the

precepts of the Prophet. "I do not kill. I do not steal. Besides, I am Hadji, and in these mountains I must keep out the cold. Allah will not think much of this little thing." A genial saint was Jaffar, but he drew the line at pig. I used to try and smuggle some slices of bacon into the frying pan, to accompany the morning coffee, but he smelt it, and looked so pained that I gave it up.

After three days' riding we began to get into a more wooded region. High up on the left slope was the very ground for the *Ægagrus*, or *Bezoar*, goat—i.e. steep slopes of deciduous forest, with projecting buttresses of rock and broken cliffs. Having hunted them elsewhere I knew the ground they like. Then the map showed that a big snowy range lay a little back on our right front. We began to talk about a digression to these heights. The suggestion was not cordially received. Our kind hosts regarded us, and especially the lady, as bales of precious goods to be safely delivered at the other end. Their passive resistance was ably seconded, and doubtless exaggerated, by the "Treasure." The paths had been washed away or were slippery after the rain, or there was no game, or nothing to eat. "Nous serons absolument perdus"; but by that time we had got used to this expression in his mouth. Moreover the poor man had a fixed impression that every one he met was a robber or an assassin. He must have suffered terribly in his mind.

The fact that our hosts were paying the piper made it still more difficult to call the tune. Nevertheless our desire to explore prevailed. We left the main track, and, passing through a grove of walnut-trees and up a side valley, climbed by a series of zigzags to the village of



THE FOREST REGION.

Rutlav. Here my surmises were confirmed by our finding a splendid pair of *Ægagrus* horns and a tame baby *túr*.

At Rutlav we breakfasted on the roof of a house. I happened to have noted the menu, which I give in the order of serving as a sample of our fare—

Zakouska.

Slices of turnip and onion.

Déjeuner.

Boiled chicken, in fragments.

Roast lamb, torn limb from limb.

Shishliks of liver.

Grapes.

Soup.

Honey.

Cheered by this fare, and the liquor which accompanied it, Jaffar proposed some rifle shooting. The target he suggested was a cow, feeding on the opposite slope of the ravine. Fortunately the distance was long, and after several shots had been fired with a Cossack's rifle, the cow still fed on without turning her head. No doubt if the result had been different, our friend, whose authority is absolute, would have arranged the matter without difficulty. We ought perhaps to have remained at Rutlav, for we afterwards saw that there was pretty ground for goats within reach of it, but our goal was Achvach, which we reached three hours later by a very steep track. That village lies at a height of over seven thousand feet and faces the northern end of the Bogos range, from which two glaciers descend. It is built on a steep slope, and the square houses, standing in regular sequence, one behind the other, have the appearance of a fragment of a giant staircase. These villages are horribly dirty after rain. The mud,

with accompanying filth of every kind, stands inches deep in the narrow lanes between the houses, so that our entry was not promising, but, after some diving about through dark passages, we were fortunate in finding a house newly built, though not quite complete. The roof was on, but there were no partitions to the rooms. It was thus spacious and airy, but wanting in seclusion. We met the latter difficulty by pitching our tents on the first floor. This is a capital solution if small tents be carried, and I commend it to future travellers. The lady's tent occupied what I will call the drawing-room. The floor being made of rough birch stems covered with eight inches of soil, the tent pegs are easily inserted; in fact too easily, for they sometimes go through altogether.

It must be remembered that in this country the grave and reverend seigneurs of every village consider it their privilege to enter at all hours, and gaze on strangers. On this account I recommend every traveller to bring with him a small Alpine tent. It is quickly erected and requires only two cords and pegs, thus filling little space. The floor and sides being in one piece, it offers an adequate defence against vermin, as well as a screen from obtrusive eyes. If two screw hooks were carried it could be equally well erected on a wooden floor. It can thus be pitched with equal ease beneath a roof, or on the top of it.

In Daghestan it is not very easy to pitch one's camp away from the villages. In the first place the country is too steep. If a platform sufficiently level is found it is a great chance if it combines the other prime necessities of water, food for horses, and firewood, as well as shelter for the men. As long as the weather is assured, the latter



OUR TWO NAIBS.

condition is of small account, but, come rain or snow in a camp where there is no hollow rock or shepherd's barracks, human nature must resent it.

After our arrival at Achvach we found that Mourtu Zali had sent on a message to the village, with an order to the local shikaris to go out and try to kill something before our arrival. It was impossible to resent this attention, which was designed for our entertainment, but it was rather annoying to find that the ground had been disturbed.

We were assured that there were plenty of tûr; that is the *Capra pallase*, or *cylindricornis*, which is closely allied to the Indian burrhel, and must not be confounded with the true Caucasian ibex, which is only found in the neighbourhood of Elbruz. Unfortunately there was too much fresh snow on these northern-facing slopes for a successful hunt. From the foot of a range of cliffs I spied a band of females and small beasts, and one old solitary ram in another place. The latter was extremely restless, as is often the case when the feeding grounds are covered with fresh snow. After several hours of tramping, during which I was half dazed by the intolerable glare reflected from the white surface, I reached a crest commanding the spot where I had last seen this ram, but something had put him away hours before. At any rate, he was no longer there. This arduous but vain climb caused me to commune seriously with myself, and I resolved that, at fifty-seven, I had no business to be tûr hunting at all, and would have no more of it. I kept this good resolution for nearly a week.

The next morning the Naibs suggested a drive of the wooded slopes opposite for the wild goats which undoubtedly frequent them. I accepted gladly, as I would

have done any other suggestion which promised an idle day. The idea that the beaters would be toiling while I sat still had something soothing in it. We rode to the appointed spot. A sheep was then killed, and in due time shishliks were served to us on a pretty meadow in the sunshine. Finally we strolled to our posts, where, I think, I dozed. There were several reasons why no wild goats should come that way. One was that two Cossacks sat in a conspicuous position on a rock above me, but I was too idle to tell them to go away. Nothing happened, but it was a pleasant day.

When we left Achvach we retraced our steps to the main gorge of the Koisu which we continued to ascend. The track was being improved, which it certainly needed, but the process rendered it eminently uncomfortable for us. The way, which was carried along the face of the cliffs, some two or three hundred feet above the torrent, was cumbered with slippery fragments of slate. As Barthelmie said, "Je me trouve plus solide à pied," but to get off at a bad place was not always possible. You arrived too suddenly in the middle of it. When your right shoulder is grazing the rocks, and a vista of unknown depth is revealed between your left stirrup and the saddle, there is nothing to get off upon. Sometimes, on rounding a corner, the track seems to have come to an end altogether. Certainly it is impossible to turn round. If, in such an *impasse*, you involuntarily check your horse, a voice from behind urges you for heaven's sake not to stop here, and there is nothing for it but to sit tight and give the animal his head. Generally he takes the hint, and, with well measured steps, plants his feet with certainty on



ACH VACH - SUNSET.

the scantiest footholds. Sometimes, and that is the most trying of all, he lowers his head, and, with a slight snort, pauses to consider. You feel that to hesitate is to be lost, but it is only his way, and after an hour or two of this sort of work you begin to discover that he does not share your fears, or suffer from giddiness, and that his legs are as reliable as those of a practised mountaineer. These remarks apply chiefly to the tracks which are carried along the gorges. The mountain paths, at a higher level, though often exceedingly steep, are much less trying to the nerves.

This great ravine was well defended in former times by castles of which the ruins crown some heights, and below them square towers commanding the actual track. On one of these I noticed a stone, built into the wall twenty feet from the ground, on the smooth surface of which was an archaic representation of a wild goat and a boar—very typical of the country and its inhabitants.

At the villages the lady was an object of great curiosity to the natives, and this was not surprising, for they had never seen a woman in European costume before. The male population commonly turned out *en masse* and ranged themselves in a long row, the *Starshina*, or mayor, and other elders at one end, down to the youngest boy, who brought up the other. After profound obeisance to their Naib, it was amusing to note their hesitation about the obligation to salute a woman, a thing they had never done before. They were not sure that she was not a princess, or something mysterious and saintly, and looked round furtively to see what the head-man did. I have noticed the same expression on the face of a policeman

when he meets a magistrate on a bicycle, his respect for the justice contending with his natural contempt for the wheelman.

At Chardokolo, Mourtu Zali, who prudently dots his wives about his dominion, owns an establishment. He brought his senior wife to see us. She even sat down to eat with us, but her embarrassment was painful to witness. She had perhaps never spoken to a man, besides her lord, before. My daughter reported that in private she became quite brisk. She was accompanied by her son, who, though thirteen years old, was still in the harem, and therefore entitled, as he thought, to enter wherever his mother went, without reserve. It will be seen that these people have to some extent emancipated themselves from the strictest Mussulman views as to the weaker sex, but this liberality does not extend to sharing with them the burdens of life. It is the women who do all the work, except guarding the flocks, in which occupation, until recently, there was often rough work to be done. In this duty their dogs are their able coadjutors, and must make a night surprise difficult. If you see a small haystack slowly moving up the hill, it is a woman's figure half hidden beneath, and all the while the men are commonly gossiping under the sunniest wall. The group on the opposite page represents such a female agricultural labourer fetching hay. Her baby is in the miniature cradle at her back, and is rocked by a slight continuous movement of the shoulder. The taking of this picture almost led up to a tragic ending. The sudden appearance of one of my men frightened the horse, who dashed forward, and banged against the baby, spinning the woman round



WOMAN—THE BREADWINNER.

like a tee-totum, while the first-born was shot over his tail, heels over head, whirling down the steep slope. Happily no physical damage was done that a few copecks would not heal, but the woman burst into a torrent of anathemas at the evil eye which had bedevilled her live stock, human and equine.

At the large village of Bejito our Naib owned another house, but if he had any more wives there, they were kept in the background. As in many other villages in this neighbourhood, the houses of Bejito are piled in picturesque confusion on both sides of a narrow river, which traverses the length of the village, and is spanned by several bridges. The sparkle of the water deepens the shadows of the projecting roofs, and the rich tones of the heavy beams, cut from the adjoining forest. The harvest had just been gathered, and at every house the strange sight was seen of a yoke of oxen thrashing it out, not on the ground, but on the roof of the first story. The reason for this is not far to seek. In this steep country it is the only level platform available. As in so many parts of the East, a lad or girl stands on a small sledge and drives the slow moving beasts round the circle, while others toss the grain in the breeze, which carries away the chaff in a glittering cloud.

Mourtu Zali had much business to transact at Bejito. He generally sat in his balcony to hear charges. During the sitting of the court, if it can be so described, two clerks lay at full length on the floor writing reports in the Arabic character, while petitioners, witnesses, and defendants clamoured below, in a little crowd. Sometimes he descended among the latter, and administered condign punish-

ment with his own hands. Thus, in a case of supposed horse-stealing, the culprit was seized by the ear and violently shaken to and fro. This punishment was at least soon over, and seems scarcely adequate to the offence; but then I was informed that it was doubtful if any horse had been stolen at all.

We had been led to expect unlimited game at Bejito, but that was perhaps because Mourtou Zali had occasion to go there. The village is too deep-seated in the valley, and when I expressed the desire to seek a camp higher up under the southern peak of the Bogos, which dominated the district, I was told that it was too steep, even for natives, to get up there.

He suggested a neighbouring valley, to reach which involved a circuitous ride, where he said we should find the animals in abundance, and we started the next morning with our camp equipage on three horses. On the eve of our departure my confidence was rather shaken by a suggestion that we should remain where we were until a man had been sent, to see if there was any game there at all. My scepticism was increased when "the best hunter in the village," who acted as guide, temporarily lost his way, and thenceforth declined to express an opinion about anything. About midday we reached a point from which we could survey the valley in question, and found, to our disgust, that it was full of cattle, who were pasturing to the tops. The owner of these beeves, whom we encountered on the track, assured us that there was no water to camp by, except at the bottom of the valley, and that if any tûr existed they were many hours' distant. Acting on his emphatic advice we returned, in some humiliation, to Bejito.



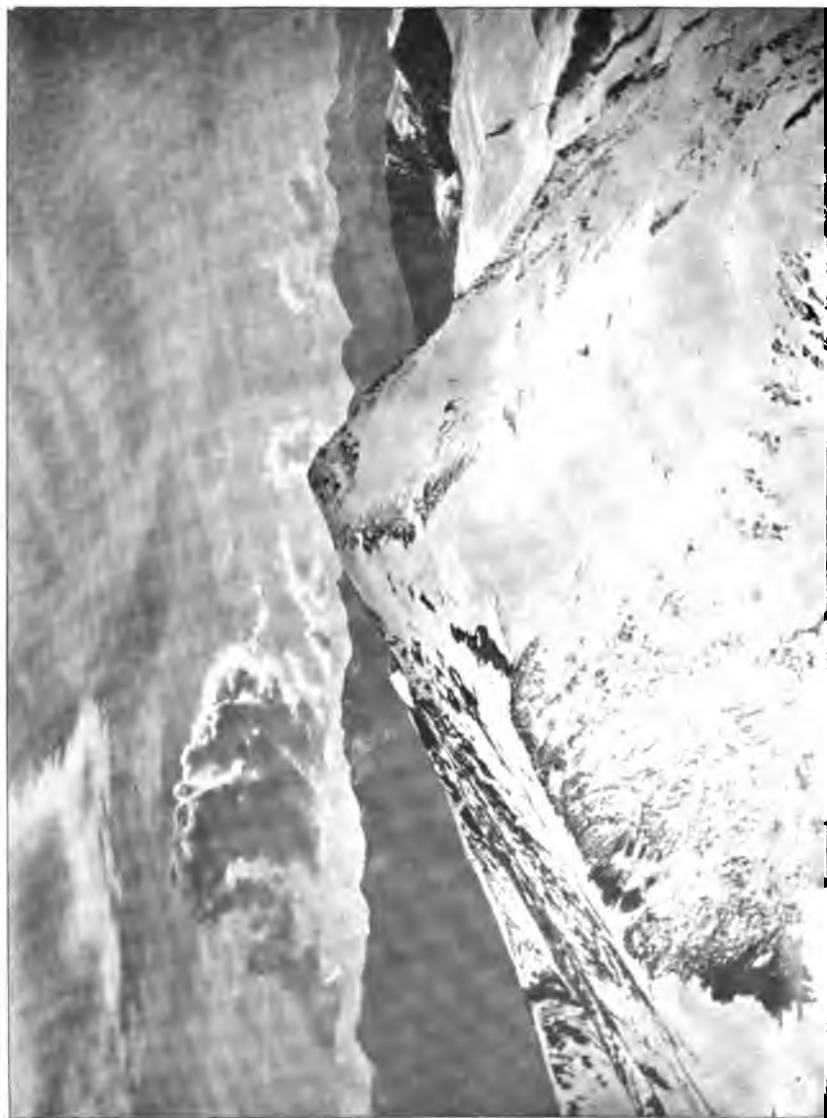
VILLAGE NEAR BEITO.

I now determined to explore for myself, and, leaving my daughter behind for that day, started early, in company with Barthelmie and another native, whom I may describe as the "second best" hunter, and who really did know something of the places frequented by the *tûr*. Riding up a valley which led directly to the base of the peak, we reached, in two hours, a spot where a landslip had dammed back the stream, forming a small lake, which had subsequently drained away. The moist bed of this lake was the only level spot to be seen, and it was not rendered more enticing as a camping ground by the remains of an enormous avalanche, the surface of which was black with the *débris* which it had brought down, and which filled the bottom of the ravine for a distance of several hundred yards.

To reach the level at which *tûr* might be expected still involved a very long climb, but this spot was the highest at which we could find both wood and water. The drawbacks of such a camp were compensated by the important fact that there were no signs of men or cattle in the whole valley. I therefore sent back the horse and its owner with a written message to my daughter, suggesting that she should try to bring the camp up to this point. We now began to ascend the steep grass-slopes which led up to the highest peaks. In about an hour Barthelmie made out a band of fifteen *tûr* far above us. They were feeding in a sort of basin formed of smooth slopes of loose, black shale, and would evidently be difficult to approach. For three hours more we steadily tramped upwards, and then, finding ourselves at no great distance from the animals, sat down to discuss luncheon, and the best means of crossing the smooth slopes which intervened between us and them.

We had relied on finding water in the neighbourhood of the snow, forgetting to allow for the porous character of this soil. To our annoyance we now found that we were far above the last trickle of it, and had to go thirsty for the rest of the day. It was while sitting here that I made my first acquaintance with that regal bird, the snow partridge. I heard them chattering among the stones at no great distance from us, but quite failed to discover them with the glass, until one spread out his wings and tail, showing a great expanse of white. In the pencilling of the wings they resemble our common brown bird rather than the "red leg," but they are fully as large as a black-cock. A little later three flew overhead, and in that position showed almost entirely white. The Governor, in whose house I had seen a mounted specimen, had called them "wild turkeys," and had described them as friends of the tûr, living in close association with those animals, whom they are said to warn of the approach of danger. Our subsequent experience confirmed this. All those I saw were living above the last traces of grass, i.e., at an elevation exceeding ten thousand feet.

From this point we looked to the south, right over the watershed of the range, and could see the extended plain towards Tiflis. Far beyond it a broken chain of mountains was faintly outlined, and, in the dimmest distance, I could just distinguish a very lofty double peak, the western summit being considerably higher than the eastern. There can be little doubt that this was Ararat. At any rate it lay exactly under the sun at eleven o'clock, which corresponded with the position of that famous isolated peak. Though it is beyond the Turkish



THE HOME OF THE SNOW-PARTRIDGE.

frontier, and the direct distance is about a hundred and eighty miles, it is not physically impossible to see a mountain of sixteen thousand feet elevation at that distance, from another post twelve thousand feet in height. Indeed, Mr. Freshfield, a most reliable observer, tells me that he has seen these very Daghestan mountains from the summit of Ararat.

After another hour's climbing, we found ourselves nearly on a level with the herd of which we were in pursuit, and which we were pleased to notice contained several old rams, distinguishable by their dark chestnut colour. Unfortunately nothing but smooth slopes of shale, without a scrap of covering, intervened. In fact, there seemed nothing for it but to pass right over the top of the peak, which is marked in the map as 12,300 feet in height. Before we could do that, it was necessary to cross to the northern side of the ridge. Here we encountered a great depth of snow, and the labour of pounding through it, following on so many hours of arduous climbing, brought on a severe cramp, the effects of which stayed with me for many days. It was only after much shampooing and pommelling, on the part of Barthelmie and the native, that I could proceed. The latter began to show signs of distress, and said that to climb the peak on this side was impossible. Now, though it involved a long rock climb, we could see no insurmountable obstacle; at any rate it appeared to be the only chance of making an approach. As often happens the difficulties, when tackled, almost disappeared, and were limited to one awkward passage, in the middle of which the cramp seized me again, and, while one man held me up, the

other kneaded the spasm out of my legs. When two-thirds of the way up the cone, Barthelmie, who had been peering over the edge of the *Arête*, announced that the band of tûr were, for the moment, hidden behind a low cliff of rocks. The opportunity was too good to be lost, and something must be dared. The southern side of the cone, though very steep, was composed of slopes of soft snow and loose black shale. Thus it afforded easy foothold. We ran down it, and, in three minutes, had passed all our difficulties.

After a stalk which had involved eight hours of severe climbing, and a description which has been nearly as long, the reader will anticipate a triumphant finish. Unfortunately a third attack of cramp laid me out on my back, and the pain perhaps unsteadied my hand. Peering over, we saw some of the rams a hundred and fifty yards off, but a female and a kid, who were close to us, prevented our getting any nearer. The shot was not a difficult one, but a puff of grey dust proclaimed a miss. Instead of gaining a higher point as chamois, or true ibex, would have done, these tûr, whose habits proclaim them more nearly allied to wild sheep, ran straight downhill, and then seemed to disappear into the bowels of the earth. They had, in reality, concealed themselves in a maze of steep gullies two thousand feet lower, which were almost invisible from above.

I now perceived through the glass two tiny specks of green far below on the camping place, which I identified as our tents, and knew that my daughter had succeeded in bringing our equipment to that point. We had therefore plenty of time, and followed the tûr to their new fastness;



A CANTILEVER BRIDGE.



but to follow game that has been disturbed is seldom of any use. The only result of this excursion was to land us at the bottom of an awkward ravine, from which it was not easy to extricate ourselves. The gully itself was impossible to descend, and we had to effect a traverse of the grass slopes which flanked it, which were of extreme steepness. I was wearing shoes with felt soles, which had become hard and greasy with the day's work. The grass was long, and lay over like thatch, concealing the footholds. It was also slightly damp with dew. After three or four nasty slips, I swallowed my pride, and, giving one hand to each of my companions, allowed myself to be slowly hoisted along, like a disabled man, till easier ground was reached. I have already spoken of the crampons which the herdsmen carry, and which they put on in such places. Some wear a sort of coarse, knitted moccasin, which gives an excellent hold. On subsequent occasions I always used boots with nails, which I found to give sufficient support.

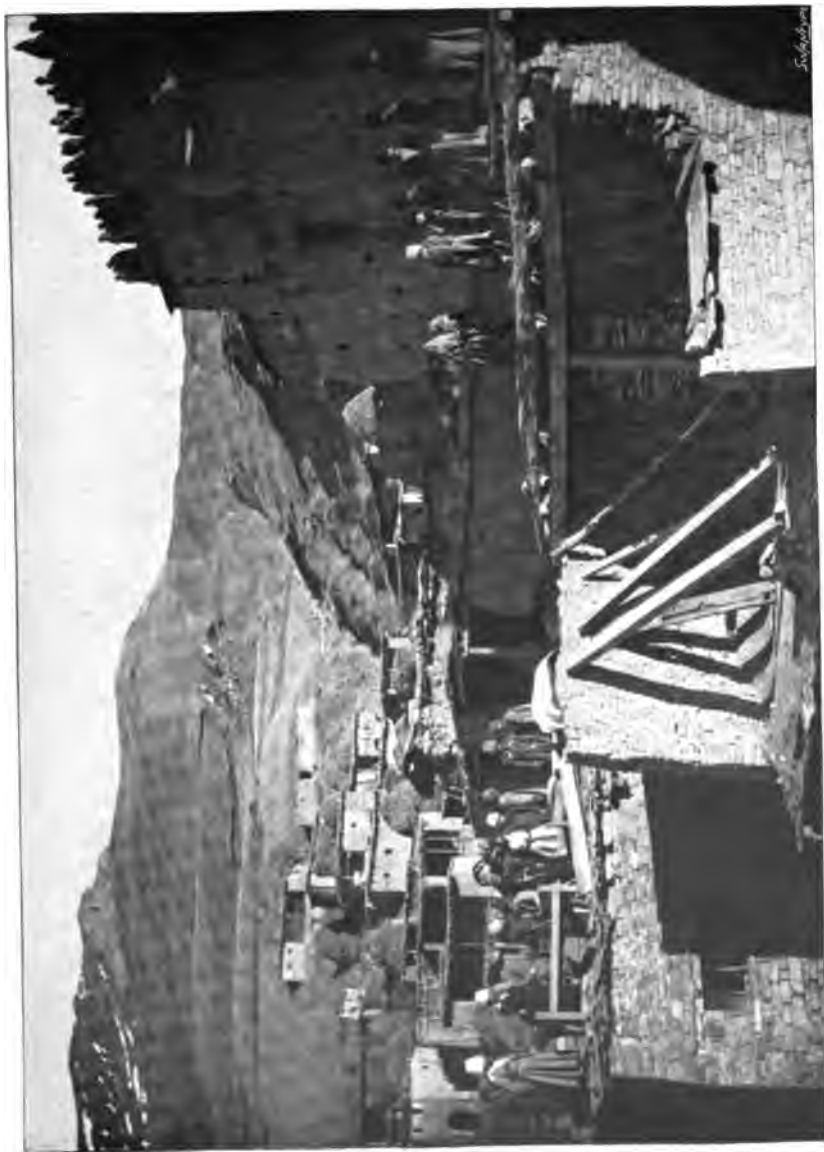
A little farther on T. met me. Her task had not been an easy one, as the messenger, who knew the position chosen for the camp, had absconded after delivering my note, and the "Treasure" had been more than usually helpless and despondent. He had forgotten many things, including the ground sheets—a serious omission in a damp camp.

The next day my daughter, who wished to make the acquaintance of the *tûr* and the snow partridge, accompanied me. I need not describe a second day on the same ground, but one incident is worthy of record. We had reached some rocks from which we had an admirable opportunity of watching a band of *tûr* which lay basking

about two hundred and fifty yards off. After a time they began slowly to approach our position, feeding in a straggling line. In a few minutes they would have been within shot, when a covey of nine or ten snow partridges rose from a point at a higher level, and beyond them, and flew straight over their heads, uttering loud cries of alarm. The birds had undoubtedly seen us, and, as there was no reason for fear on their own account, they being quite three hundred yards from us, their action, I have no doubt, was intended as a warning. It certainly had that effect. Up went the heads of the tûr, and, after standing in an attitude of attention for some minutes, they turned and retraced their steps. Though annoyed at losing my chance, I was pleased to have this confirmation of a very curious trait. It is paralleled by the better known cases of the crocodile bird and the rhinoceros bird.

At an earlier period of the day, and at a much lower level, we had seen a great many black game. The cock bird is worthy of notice, differing as it does materially from its Scotch cousin, in that it is almost completely black, the conspicuous white subcaudal patch being absent. The tail also is much longer and less curled. They are fond of feeding in the neighbourhood of the rhododendron, which grows in patches many acres in extent on the bare hill sides. The mention of this Pontic rhododendron suggests a curious observation. When transplanted to an English soil, and sheltered by trees, it runs up to a height of twelve or fifteen feet, yet in its own chosen habitat, where it is compressed by winter snow and checked by summer drought, it stops at thirty inches.

In the hope of retrieving the failures above described,



OUR "AT HOME" AT ACH VACH.

I climbed a third time towards the feeding grounds of the tûr, a matter of four thousand feet above the camp; but the state of my muscles, which I had already tried rather severely, put a curb on my soaring ambition. They struck work for the time being, and as F. rejoined us about the same time from his camp in the midst of the wild-goat country, and wished to try his luck with the tûr, I left the ground clear for him. Some days later he caught us up, bringing the head of a three-year old ram.

We had been assured that the Caucasian red stag, sometimes described by naturalists as the *Maral*, but locally known as the *Olen*, existed near Bejito, and of this, some fine antlers which we had seen in a village some way down the valley afforded proof. I was naturally anxious to discover their habitat before the season of calling should be over. From the heights above Bejito I had carefully surveyed the forest which covered the slopes near that village, and had seen that a camp might be advantageously made on an excellent strategical position above it. I now proposed to Mourtu Zali that we should return thither, but he was averse to retracing our steps, and promised to lead us to another district nearer to the watershed, which, he said, abounded with these animals. The language difficulty hindered our ascertaining the true inwardness of his reluctance. Perhaps there was no path through the forest, or no water, or no mutton near enough for us to slay and eat. I had asked him some days before to send men to listen for stags. He said they had brought an unfavourable report, but I could not get speech of the men.

Having practically no choice, we fell in with the

Naib's suggestion. We travelled to the southward, and, in due course, left the valley, and ascended by a steep path through the forest, till its upper limit was reached at an elevated grassy buttress, which afforded an ideal camping-place in all respects, except that there were no signs of the promised deer. But we had left all signs of human habitation far below, and revelled in a lovely panorama of forest, now in its full autumn glory. The bronze of the beech mingled with the gold of the birch. A note of scarlet here and there was contributed by the mountain ash. Every one knows how daintily that dame places her finishing touches of leaf and berry. Beneath these trees was an undergrowth, or groundwork, of azalea, which, in dying, exhibits an unmatched wealth of colour. It is not scarlet, or brown, or purple, but a suggestion of all three. A little dell close by was full of some giant hemlock plants, whose silvery seed vessels spread themselves on stalks eight or nine feet high. L

Though we listened patiently we could hear no call of the stag; nor were any recent tracks to be seen. A herdsman who came into camp said there were none about.

For another long day we followed a path along the top of an elevated grassy ridge. Such ridges abound in the neighbourhood of the watershed dividing Daghestan from Kakhetia, and, as most of them are traversed by good tracks, I believe it would not be difficult to ride from end to end of Daghestan, following always the actual watershed or its immediate neighbourhood. On this occasion we were unable to enjoy the prospect which such a high, level route no doubt commanded, for



THRASHING ON THE HOUSE-TOPS

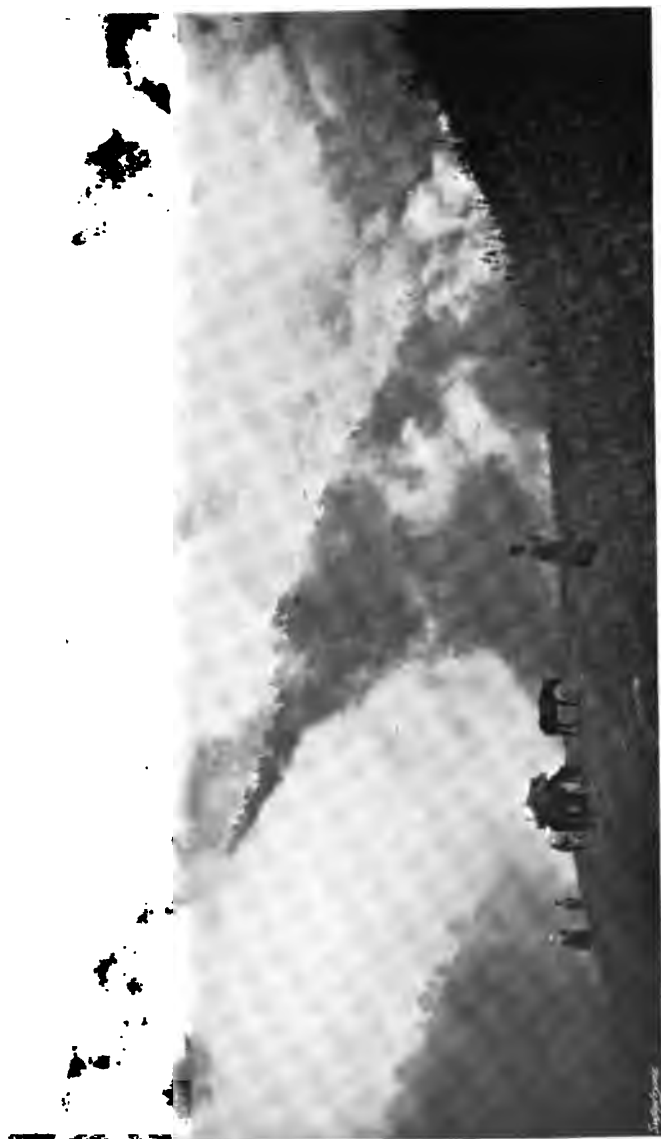
we were all the time enveloped in dense cloud. The only visible objects were some grouse, several of which were encountered strutting on the path. Owing to the impossibility of distinguishing colours in a fog, I could not at first identify the species, but they ultimately proved to be black game. Their tameness was such that they allowed me to approach within four or five yards, and, in the hope of varying our bill of fare, I borrowed a rifle from one of the Cossacks—my own were in their cases, to protect them from the damp—and took steady aim at the head of one of the creatures. These weapons are very rough and have no trigger-guard, consequently the pull off has to be extremely heavy. I tugged away at the clumsy tool, which refused to go off, while my companions tittered behind. Strange to say, when at last, after a frantic effort, it exploded, this phlegmatic bird, who was not a penny the worse, took no notice beyond turning its head about. I reloaded, walked a step or two nearer, and again fired with no result, except that the bird looked still more surprised. At the third shot I decapitated it, and it subsequently made a welcome addition to our supper, toasted on a stick. I do not know whether to attribute this phenomenal tameness to the bird's dread of flying in a mist, or to fearlessness born of inexperience.

Late in the afternoon there was a partial break, and, reaching the watershed about the same time, we saw, through the gaps in the cloud, patches of the great plain to the south. Here and there a bend of a river gleamed in the sunshine, while, deep below us, lay an immense, silent, timbered basin, where the dispersing clouds were

still wreathing about the tree-tops. This is part of the forest of Kakhetia, which covers the southern slope of the range. Throughout the vast extent of woodland below us, there was no sign of habitation or of human tracks. Only above it, on the steep grass-slopes, one or two patches of brighter green denoted that on these spots the flocks are herded in summer.

The path, which for some miles had been a mere sheep-track, now disappeared altogether, and we led our horses down the declivity towards wood and water. At a spot somewhat less steep than the rest of the slope, we cast off the loads. While we were pitching the tents and devising means to prevent ourselves rolling out of them in the night, Mourtu Zali called my attention to a "tûr," as he called it, gazing at us about four hundred yards off. It was no tûr, but a chamois, the first I had seen. Then a woodcock flitted overhead. But a still greater excitement was in store for us. All hands were suddenly stayed, and we listened to a long-drawn sound which reached us from the opposite side of the valley, and which might be the moaning of an imprisoned spirit. It was the unmistakable call of a stag, and was answered by another. All eyes were strained in that direction, and some thought they saw dim forms crossing an open glade.

The drawback to the position we had chosen was a very deep ravine, which lay between us and the wooded slopes whence the sounds proceeded. An attempt which I made to reach them the same evening was frustrated by the depth of this ravine. Darkness overtook me before I had even reached the bottom of it. At this late season—October 10—stags are quiet nearly the whole of the



DISPERSING CLOUDS.

daylight hours. The only chance lay in reaching them in the early morning before they ceased calling for the day, or about sunset. There was no fear of my not waking early enough. The exciting chorus was maintained continuously through the dark hours. In the middle of the night I left camp with the native "Habakkuk" and another carrying a lantern. It was nasty work seeking a practicable way down the slope, for the night was exceptionally dark, and the men unfamiliar with the district. Clinging to trailing birch-stems, or tussocks of grass, we hung the feeble light over abysses which might be six feet deep or sixty or six hundred. Repeatedly we had to turn up again and seek an easier way. Thus it was already daylight before we reached the river-bed. The hour of prayer must be respected; then further delay occurred, but only for a moment "to make bread"—a slight operation. Habakkuk simply scooped water into the skin bag in which he carried his meal, and kneaded it into lumps. With such digestions, what wonder that these peasants withstood the Russians so sturdily!

By this time the stags, who had kept on roaring till it grew light, had almost ceased, but I heard one challenge, and thought I could locate it in a certain grove about a thousand feet up the opposite slope. I determined our course, as nearly as I could, so as to traverse the forest above him. This side of the ravine proved even steeper than the other, and we soon got among a troublesome undergrowth of azalea, beech-scrub, and tall weeds. It was arduous work, and I let Habakkuk carry my rifle. Unfortunately we either miscalculated the position of the stag, or he had moved. We had been climbing for an

hour, and were approaching the upper limits of the forest. In this part there are wide glades, covered with raspberry bushes, and other rank herbage. Each of these openings, as we came to it, was most cautiously surveyed. I had been expecting to find the stag rather beyond, and on a level with us. On these steep forest-slopes there is a peculiarity of the wind which must always be borne in mind, and for the neglect of which I perhaps paid dearly on this occasion. During the daylight hours the currents of air blow upwards, in the night downwards. The change takes place about an hour after sunrise and an hour before sunset, but this varies somewhat according to the aspect of the slope. This change, it will be noted, coincides very often with the critical moment of a stalk.

Suddenly I saw the stag straight up the slope about sixty yards above us. He had been feeding in one of the above-mentioned openings, and had probably winded us. He trotted a few yards, and paused for a moment behind a mass of beech-scrub. The glimpse of him was brief, but enough to show that he was a big-bodied beast, nobly crowned. I dashed for the rifle, but Habakkuk, who had not seen the stag, and misunderstanding my object, turned the bag, which he carried on the other shoulder, to me. The delay was brief, but long enough to save the stag. By the time I had the rifle in hand he had passed the rest of the opening, and disappeared beyond it. A smarter man might have got a shot in ; besides, he would probably *have carried his own rifle*. I am sure that Habakkuk regards me to this moment as a clumsy booby, and, from the air of disgust with which he afterwards described the incident to his fellows, he doubtless said as

much, but it was more his fault than mine. In such cases we all seek for a scapegoat.

At the top of the rise I found a well-trodden *brunfte platz*, and, a little later, from the edge of a steep gully, I perceived another stag on the opposite side of it. He also was a "hart of grease," but I judged him to be a smaller beast. Still he carried a nice wide head, which is characteristic of these Daghestan stags. He had not seen me, and offered a fair broadside, but was, as I estimated, about two hundred yards off, and this is too far out for the .500 bore rifle which I carry for woodland shooting. Partly for this reason, and partly because I knew there was a better stag about, I held my fire, which I afterwards, it is needless to say, regretted, for the chance was not repeated.

All the stags were now silent except one impatient youngster, whose constant moo-ings seemed to proceed from the farther side of a second deep ravine. But to have attempted to reach him that day, over such difficult ground, would have been hopeless, and would have led us too far from camp. Besides, the *mamelon*, where I rested, commanded several attractive openings, in which I hoped that something would show itself in the course of the day. I lay in the sun for many hours, hoping that the sounds of love and fury would recommence. But there was no renewal. No doubt I had startled one of them, and had possibly given the wind to others; but there was another circumstance which contributed to this result. Towards evening I was mystified and somewhat annoyed to notice the smoke of a camp fire in the heart of the forest, on the same side as our camp. On arrival at this camp Mourtu Zali's Cossacks, as they did at each camp, had quickly

arranged a snug domicile for him, by cutting pliant birch rods, which they bent over to form the frame of a gipsy tent, and covered with carpets. He generally remained seated in this, like Diogenes in his tub, dispensing justice and wisdom. I was therefore not a little surprised, when I ultimately reached the tents, to learn that he had gone out hunting on his own account. I think it was the first time he had ever attempted to do so, for climbing was not his forte. Being unaccustomed to going on foot, he had been completely pounded by the difficulties he encountered. In fact, though he had proceeded no great distance, he was too exhausted, and frightened, to return to camp that night, which is no wonder, for, as he afterwards told my daughter, it was on hands and knees that he progressed. We learnt his plight from his Cossack whom he sent back for some vodka and other comforts. When he ultimately returned on the following day, he announced that never again would he trust himself in such places. We noticed that, for the next two days, his orisons were unusually prolonged.

The next day, in the company of my daughter, I again went far afield, but not far enough to hear any stags calling within reach. They had doubtless been disturbed, as I have described, and also by our own men, who could by no means be kept from shouting to one another. Besides, I suppose that wherever in the world stags are roaring, there will be men after them, and, as we discovered later, this upland valley was no exception to the rule. We thought, by sleeping out, to reach more distant ground, and sent Habakkuk to camp for food and blankets. The "Treasure," with his usual foresight, cut us down to



НАВАККУК.

half rations and one blanket. He afterwards explained this as a sort of compromise. He could not feel really sure whether we should stay out, or return to camp. So he thought that a single blanket, and a supper which was too much for one, and not enough for two, would meet the case. Our difficulty was to find a *gîte* sufficiently level to repose upon, but at length we discovered a little platform, probably formed by the uprooting of a tree at some former time, and here we built our fire. The smell of a stag was rank upon it, and it had evidently been used as a couch a few hours before. Our *pièce de resistance* was a tin of sausages, which are rather a tantalising dish. In the absence of a cooking-pan, they must be toasted on a stick, and, while giving out a most appetising odour, generally break in half, and drop into the fire at the critical moment. After consuming these well-dusted fragments, we curled ourselves up with our backs to the fire, and the canopy of beeches saved us from suffering much from the cold. A little stiff, we started again with the earliest dawn, but neither that day, nor subsequently, did I again catch sight of the coveted antlers.

It is worth while calling attention to a special difficulty which handicaps the stalker in beech woods. Dry beech leaves are more noisy than any other kind. Where this tell-tale carpet lies thickly, the sportsman, however warily he may move, whether by walking or crawling, can hardly get within a hundred yards of deer without their having notice of his approach. Oak leaves are nearly, but not quite, as bad. Other sorts rot more quickly, and crackle less. Of course, if the weather is blustering, or the leaves sodden, the case is altered.

During these woodland wanderings I repeatedly flushed woodcocks. It seems a long way south for these birds to breed, but I do not know why they should not do so at these cool elevations. They can hardly have migrated from northern forests so early—October 8th and following days. I frequently noticed bear sign, but not very recent. There is a roe in these forests which seems to follow the same law as the red deer, for they are almost twice the size of the British roe. I have studied the forests of many lands, and for beauty I should be inclined to award a high place to those of Daghestan, except for one characteristic—they are too steep. It is impossible to attain to that reposeful frame of mind which harmonises best with woodland scenery when struggling with a slope at an angle of 50°. A feature of this "Watershed" Camp was the level sea of white mist which formed itself below us, nearly every morning, filling every corner in the great bay in the mountains, across which we looked, with a white expanse, while independent clouds, at a higher plane, cast shadows on the illuminated surface.

By following one of the elevated grass ridges which I have already described, and along the crest of which there was a good path, it was possible to reach in two hours the head of the valley in which our camp was situated. The track, which is a good one, passes above a series of narrow defiles of great depth, and these are frequented by several bands of tûr, as well as many chamois. Thus it is necessary to seek them from above instead of from below, as is usually the case with mountain game. As the tûr instinctively hide themselves in the shadowy depths of these gullies, they are by no means easy to make out.



ABOVE THE TIMBER.

On the two occasions that I pursued them, I secured a small male by stalking down upon them. Unfortunately, in each case, for the reasons I have given, both Barthelmie and I were deceived as to their size. Before the stalk began, he declared to me, on both occasions, that there was a "*véritable père de famille*" among them. This was owing to the deceptiveness of the light, and though, each time, I killed the best of the band, it was very disappointing to find that they were not more than two or three years old. Of old rams we could see none, and were puzzled to discover where they hid themselves.

It was Mourtou Zali who solved the problem. He started one morning on horseback with a native hunter, and returned in the evening with one of the finest old ram's heads which I have seen. We were filled with envy, and also with surprise. How had our worthy conductor, who was apparently stumped by the most ordinary obstacle, when on foot, been able to circumvent this wary old rock-jumper. He pointed to an object about six hundred yards off, and said that he had killed the animal at that distance. It was clear that he was indulging in the pardonable exaggeration customary with his class. For the rest, his account was quite circumstantial. The place he described as a high, rocky ridge about four hours to the southward, and he said the band numbered nine or ten, all old rams.

Following his directions, Barthelmie and I rode thither the next morning, arranging for the camp to be moved in the same direction. We had no difficulty in identifying the mountain from his description—a toothed ridge about ten thousand feet high, and flanked by cliffs. It was a pity we had not discovered it sooner. It was just such a

refuge in which one would expect to find the patriarchs who shun society. For several hours we searched these rocky buttresses with our glasses in vain, but about mid-day Barthelmie spied the band, coming over from the other side, where they had been in hiding, and, though they were too distant for me to make out their horns with certainty, their dark colour proclaimed them all to be old rams.

Now Barthelmie and I had been very late on the hill the night before, and, in the darkness, had noticed a continuous shimmer of lightning far to the south—a precursor of a change. One or two smart snow showers in the course of the morning had also warned us of a coming break-up of the weather. It was a question whether we could reach that lofty ridge in time. It might be our last chance. At least we would try for all we were worth. Mounting our horses we pushed them for an hour, at their best speed, along a narrow sheep track, and then, leaving them, fairly raced straight up the face. Arrived at the top of the ridge we perceived two tarns, each about an acre in extent, deep seated in a crater-like hollow. Their surface reflected in blue black an inky cloud hastening up. Lakes like this are rare in these mountains, and, as Mourtu Zali had described them, we knew we were on the right track. Having taken the measure of his climbing powers we asked ourselves how he could have got here. The explanation was not far to seek. Here was the track of his horse! By taking a circuitous route he had actually ridden to the top of this forbidding ridge. It was a great test of horsemanship, but he had proceeded no farther. The tracks in the snow showed that only one man had gone on, and that was the native.

Our hopes rose, for half an hour's climbing along the ridge should take us to the quarry ; but a sudden darkness overtook us, with a hissing hailstorm in its wake, accompanied by thunder and lightning. Worse than all, dense cloud settled over everything. We persevered till, as it seemed, we were close to the spot where we had seen the tûr grazing. But it was certain that such a storm must have moved them, and, even if it had been possible in such cold, it was useless to wait on the chance of the mist lifting, which indeed, as it turned out, it did not do for many days. If we had been two hours sooner it is practically certain that we should have got within reach of them.

When we reached the camp, which had been pitched in the valley below, we found both men and beasts in rather a sorry plight. The ground was already white with snow, which continued to deepen every minute, and there was no wood. The men had pulled a great many rhododendron roots and stems, but they were so soaked that no coaxing would make them burn. My daughter offered to Mourtou Zali and me the hospitality of her tent for dinner. It was the last that we had together, and, though both cold and scanty, was a merry one. Then we piled on all our clothes, and made the most of our two little tents. Mine accommodated five souls, but the rest of our followers had no shelter whatever. All night we heard the crunch, crunch of the poor horses as they vainly sought the grass hidden under six inches of snow. In the morning it was evident that we could not stay where we were. Not only was it impossible to expose our men and beasts, but I dare not run the risk, in October, of being

snowed up at such a height, and so far from any village, a contingency against which I had been expressly warned by the Governor. We therefore mournfully set to work to pack our sodden belongings, some of which had to be probed for, under the white blanket which covered them, and turn our backs finally on this hunting ground. On reaching the summit level, we saw that much less snow had fallen on the south side than the north.

We were about to pass out of Mourtu Zali's domain, and as he was rather anxious about his own return to lower levels on the northern side, he took leave of us. It was with real regret that we parted from this courteous native gentleman, and I think the feeling was mutual. Although, owing to his ignorance of English methods of sport, he had not materially helped us in our search for the whereabouts of game, it is doubtful, considering the peculiarities of the "Treasure," if we should have succeeded in getting through the range without his assistance.

Passing near our previous camp, we followed an easy sheep track along the watershed, for several hours. The sun broke out at intervals, and we looked down on to craggy peaks, as black as night by contrast with the fretting vapours which concealed their bases. Boiling masses of cloud, almost as solid looking as the mountains themselves, were rent asunder, and revealed mysterious caverns of shadow, while snow showers, like pendant gauze curtains, drifted past, as it were draped ghosts fleeing before the light. The beauty of the scene made me hesitate as to the necessity of leaving it, but these same exquisite forms enveloped us again, and discharged their



OUR LAST CAMP.

contents over us, volley after volley, till horses, men, and baggage steamed with moisture, and left us in no doubt as to the policy of our retreat. Stumbling and sliding on the greasy track, we rejoined at length the "Engineers road," as the natives call the path which we had followed on the banks of the Koisu, and which here on the southern side of the range is slowly being widened to the dimensions of a carriage-way, but is still in the rudimentary stage.

Hardening our hearts against the wet, for we could get no wetter, we rode downwards towards the plain, traversing all the way the virgin forest which covers the slope from base to summit. This region is absolutely uninhabited, except by the road-makers, and we looked in vain for shelter, till, on a little clearing, the shanty of the engineer who superintends the road-making appeared. He himself was absent, but his dwelling was roomy, empty, and clean, and a roaring fire was soon blazing, in front of which, for several hours, we solaced ourselves, and hung our steaming possessions.

Down again the next day through the lower forest, now in part composed of Spanish chestnuts, just shedding their fruit, with wild pears and cherry-trees turning scarlet and orange. On the edge of the plain are many large villages, and a fertile soil, well watered. We had entered the ancient kingdom of Georgia. The belt of forest through which we had passed divides Asia from Europe, and communities of totally distinct characteristics from one another. Yet, strange to say, these characteristics are Mussulman and Asian on the European side, and Christian on the Asian side. The reason for

this is obvious. Eastern invasions followed the plains round the north end of the Caspian. Western ideas, and with them the Christian religion, travelled, also along a plain, from Batoum to the Caspian.

In a few hours we had exchanged the breezy heights of Lesghia for the enervating plains. Everything was changed. From universal barrenness we had jumped into luxuriant vegetation. Up there scanty crops can hardly be coaxed to grow in a few hollows. Here heavy ploughs were turning up the deep black mould, dragged by five yoke of oxen. In the courtyards, festooned with vines, were immense bellying earthen pots, standing five feet high, in which the grain is stored, fitting types of a plenteous land. The houses here had high-pitched roofs instead of the flat ones to which we had grown accustomed. Instead of the hardy mountaineers—a pastoral people, we found another race, who grow fat, lazy, and rather impertinent on the fruits of the teaming soil. Language, dress, expression, habits of life, were all changed. There is a large infusion of Armenians, whose characteristics are as distinct as the Jews. They have a wonderful faculty for trade, but contact with them does not enhance one's sympathy with that interesting people. At the village we reached that night we were entertained by a Georgian princess. Her reception of us was genial and her hospitable professions profuse, for the Georgians are famed for this virtue, but, like many others of the ancient owners of this soil, this family was evidently poverty stricken. The rooms, though large, were dirty, and the supper was scanty and all but uneatable. We were desperately hungry and could hardly conceal our dismay when the



AN AWKWARD TRAVERSE.

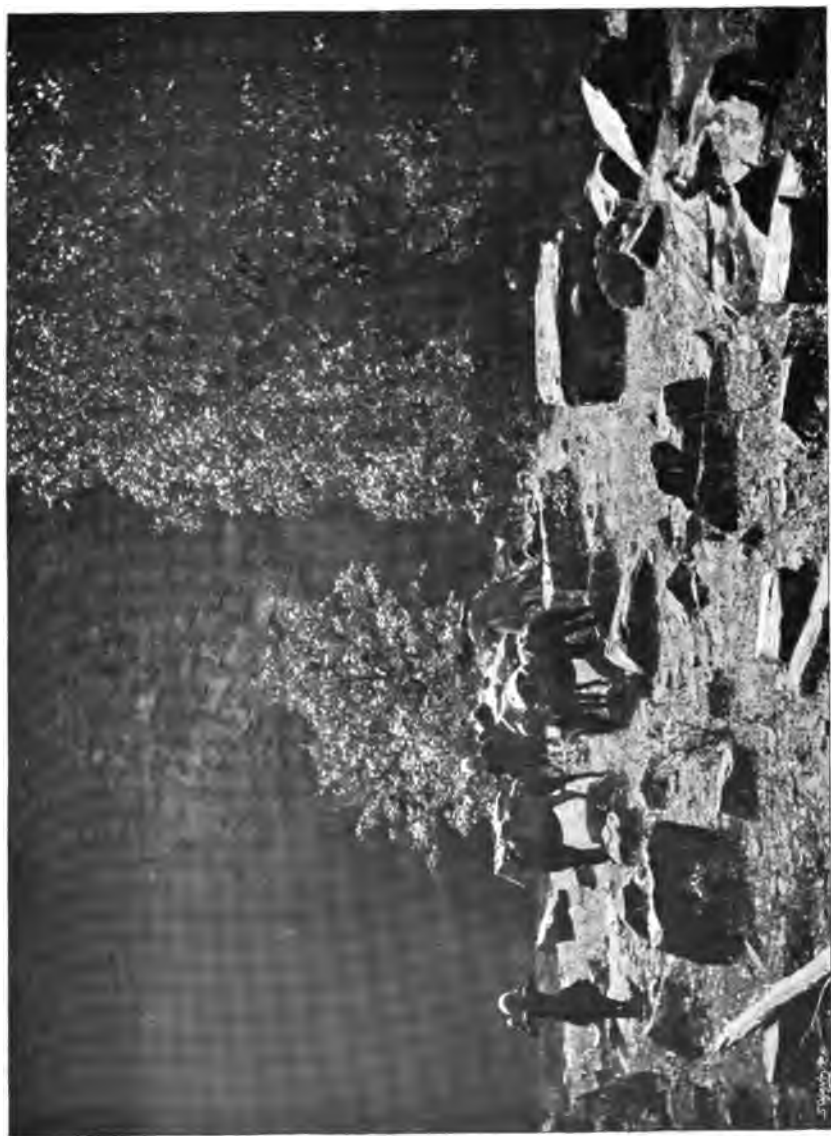
fragments of a chicken which could neither be cut nor masticated were set before us. Yet I believe it was the best they had. Her means did not keep pace with her generous intentions. That was all.

Georgia has been so often described that I need not enter into further details. Two days later we were in Tiflis.

I will conclude this chapter with a few suggestions to sportsmen who may follow in our footsteps. The whole of Daghestan is mountainous, and peaks which attain a height of ten thousand feet and upwards are very numerous. I think it may be accepted as certain that the *Capra cylindricornis*, or burrhel, exists on any mountains which reach that altitude. By this I must not be understood to mean that these animals always abide above that elevation. They constantly shift to much lower levels, especially after the herds of sheep and cattle have removed to winter quarters. Of course those ranges which are well broken up into rocky fastnesses are a much more likely "find" than those which are flanked by slopes, and covered with grass to the summit. On the latter cattle pasture, from base to summit, for the summer months, and the tûr must have a difficulty in finding a refuge. Like other wild sheep—for though nominally goats, their habits are more allied to the *Oves*—they are capital hands at concealing themselves, and are fond of ground which is scored by deep ravines. For information as to feeding grounds, lines of approach, etc., little reliance can be placed on the majority of the natives, most of whom are poor hunters, and still less on Russian officials; not that the latter wish to deceive, but they know of no method of hunting except the *battue*.

The *Capra Ægagrus*, or wild-goat proper, is, to the best of my belief, not found on the south side of the watershed. They inhabit the slopes of the deep valleys running northwards. I have already described the nature of their ground. It is at a much lower level than that frequented by the tûr, but generally steeper, and, as they only live where it is covered with brushwood, the animal is more difficult to circumvent. This is perhaps the reason that the existence of the Bezoar goat in the Caucasus has been denied by some. I should set down any sportsman who has secured a good head as being certainly skilful, and probably fortunate.

The olen or red stag carries a still more desirable trophy than either of the above named. He is certain to be found, with his hinds, in the autumn, towards the upper limit of the forest which fringes the watershed of the Daghestan range, from Tioneti to Nucha. Abercrombie mentions their existence in the neighbourhood of the former place, and he saw a tame one there. A friend of mine saw them above Nucha. I myself found them between the two. It is therefore a fair inference that they inhabit the whole of the beech forest which clothes the southern slope. The forest on the northern side is less continuous, but wherever it exists, and especially in the head waters of the four Koïsus, there are certainly deer. Cunningham writes that "stags exist to the west of Bodlith, in the Lesghian district," but he speaks from hearsay, and the above statement is somewhat vague. If he means the neighbourhood of Bodlith, I think that he is mistaken, as that part is almost bare of forest. Near Grosnia, still farther to the north, he certainly found antlers for sale, and jumps to the



THE HOUR OF PRAYER.

conclusion that the deer which owned them frequented that neighbourhood. It is possible that this was so, but, in the first place, these horns may have been brought a long way down the valleys, for *horn worship*, not unknown among a foolish sect in England, is rife in Asia from the Mediterranean to the Kara Sea; and in the next place I think it more probable that the deer abide at higher elevations, especially in the summer and autumn, and, if they visit these foot-hills at all, it is only in the winter. He mentions, in this connection, a village called San Claudia, sixty versts from Bodlith, "which is looked upon as very good ground"; I think this village lies in the Andiskoe Koisu. The information most likely applied to tûr only.

It may have been accidental that I did not see chamois until I reached the neighbourhood of the watershed. There they were numerous. Of roe deer I never saw one, but I found horns in the villages. Bears might at any time be encountered, but they are here to-day and fifty miles away to-morrow.

In the above remarks I have made no mention of the *Capra caucasica*, which, to the best of my belief, is not found in Daghestan.

I believe the whole of Daghestan to be perfectly safe for travellers. Whatever faults may be found with Russian administration, tolerance of turbulence is not one of them. Besides, the peasants are naturally friendly. As regards the important question of commissariat, "walking mutton" can always be obtained. The bread is flat and flabby, and should be toasted. Trout of excellent quality can often be obtained, and the leisurely traveller should be able to catch them for himself.

Vegetables are scarce. In my opinion all luggage should be carried in strong deal boxes. The packs are fastened on to the horses by straps of leather and toggles, which wear holes in any bag.

Owing to the lateness of our start, and the premature break-up of the weather, our available time was very limited, and we could not follow up the clues obtained, long enough to secure a good bag. The whole range was practically virgin ground to English sportsmen, and pioneers have often to content themselves with slender results. Those who follow will, I doubt not, meet with greater rewards.

THE END

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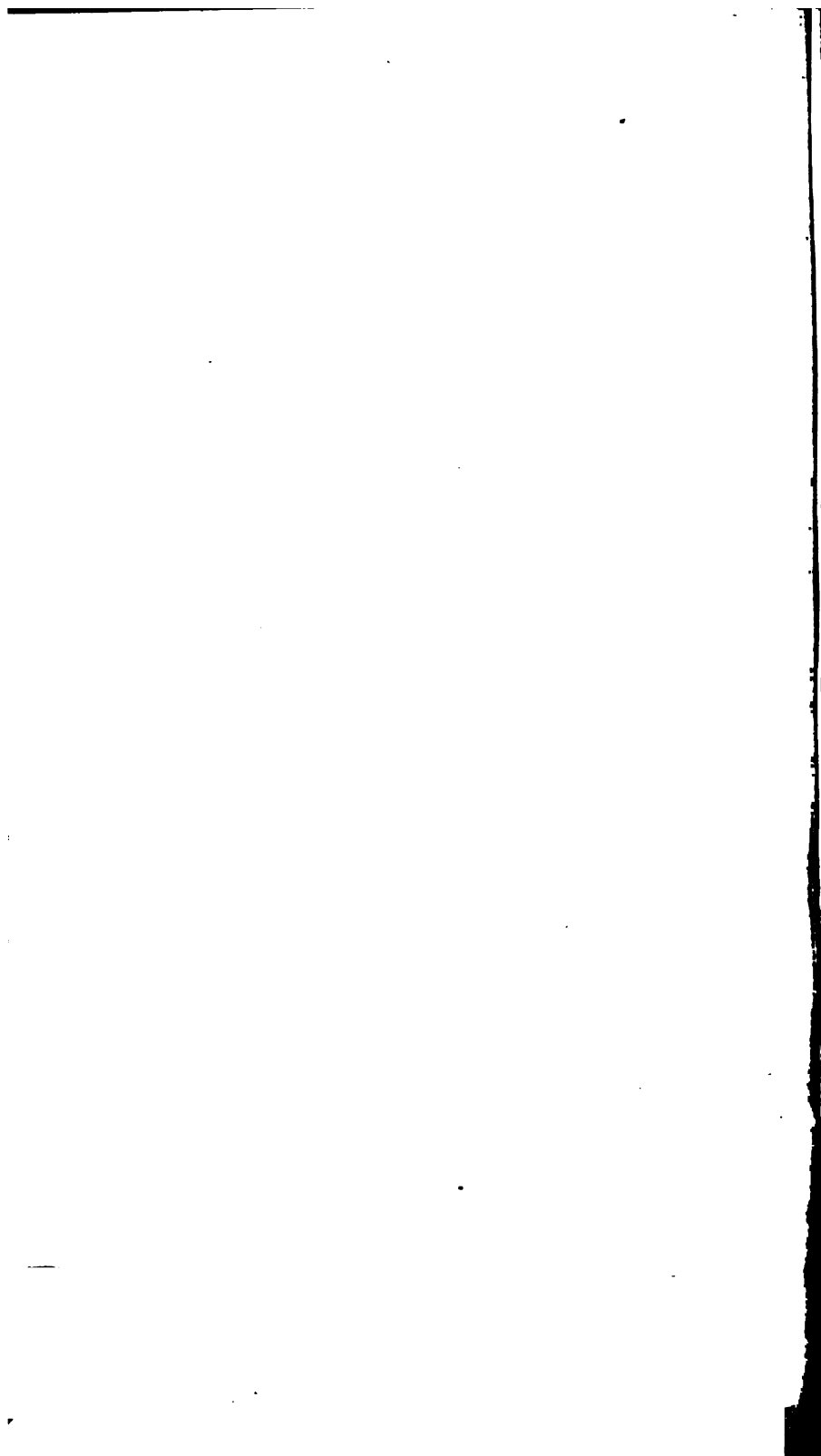
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